

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

Vol. XIX

JUNE, 1906

No. 2

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Hesitation of Gisella	Edith Macvane 1
Q. E. D.	Gordon Russell 49
At Tio Juan	Mary Austin 50
Manhattan-Town	Clinton Scollard 57
A Lively Place	Tom P. Morgan 58
Generosity Deferred	Charles Battell Loomis 59
Her Ingratitude.	Madeline Bridges 60
The Violin	Arthur Stanley Wheeler 61
The Survival of the Fittest	Anne Warner 70
Violets in Heaven	Charlotte Elizabeth Wells 72
The Strength of His Arms	Amos De Lany 73
The Golden Age	Bliss Carman 88
My Rose	Reginald Wright Kauffman 91
The Reformation of Billy Henderson	Robert McDonald 92
The Making of a Man	Edna Kenton 99
The Children	Theodosia Garrison 107
Deux Ménages	Henri Lavedan 108
The Solace	Charles Becker 112
The Untimely Fate of Lord Reginald	E. J. Rath 113
Ballade des Bêtes Noires	Edward W. Barnard 120
Three Women and Love	Arthur Stringer 121
Vision de Printemps	Victor Margueritte 130
Spring Tides	Cecil Carlisle Pangman 131
Judge Not	Leila Burton Wells 143
The Subterfuge	Mabel Herbert Urner 150
As the Rose	Ruby Archer 160

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

SINGLE COPIES 25 CENTS

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted

Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY ESS ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JULY "SMART SET"

A brilliant novelette will open the forthcoming number—a story with a well-defined purpose, yet with an underlying thread of delightful humor. It is entitled

"The Purple Border," by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

Short stories of a remarkably high standard will likewise appear. Among the writers will be found William Hamilton Osborne, Dorothea Deakin, J. J. Bell, Katharine Metcalf Roof, Anna McClure Sholl, and Charles Battell Loomis.

An essay by Richard Duffy, called "Bohemia, New York," should find many readers; and there will be poems by Florence Wilkinson, Ernest McGaffey, Arthur Davison Ficke, Mabel Earle, Ethel M. Kelley, Arthur Stringer, Frank Dempster Sherman, and others.

Copyright 1906 by
ESS ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY

WILLIAM GREEN, Printer, New York

THE HESITATION OF GISELLA

By Edith Macvane

THE great staircase leading from the foyer of the château to the dim galleries above, was built of carved stone and hung with ancient tapestries; so that Gisella's slender black figure, traversing the wide steps, seemed lost amid a confusion of motionless gray gorgons and faded mediæval knights. She ascended the stairs slowly, a trifle wearily; when suddenly from the shadows of the floor above her, a high sweet voice called her name.

"Mademoiselle Varney, is that you?"

"Yes, madame, it is I."

"Will you come up here just a moment, please?"

Gisella started in some surprise at this unexpected summons, then with a sigh turned down the vaulted corridor toward the room whence the voice had come. "Shall I come in, madame?"

"Yes, come straight in, please!"

The chamber which Gisella entered was wide and furnished with a conspicuous richness, though in an inconsequent lack of harmony that struck strangely upon the eye. Done originally, like the rest of the château, in the florid style of the Renaissance, the walls and chimney-piece glowed with bright blue and carmine, and shone with golden fleur-de-lys; but the primal decorative scheme had been so overlaid with modern lace draperies and with spindling gilt furniture whose every curve proclaimed the Bon Marché, that all its beauties were entirely lost. Over the tent-like bed, with its embroidered satin hangings and its six delicate panels by Watteau,

June, 1906—1

was flung a confusion of chiffon petticoats and flowery hats; the toilet-table, draped with the priceless lace of an antique altar-cloth, was dim with dust and strewn with a hopeless tangle of curling-tongs, silk stockings and powder-puffs. Beside the table sat a high-cheeked maid, whose tilted cap and careless attitude bespoke a comfortable disregard of any respect due to her employer. As Gisella stood hesitating upon the threshold, the servant, catching her eye, rose slowly to her feet with a grudging titter.

"Madame, here is mademoiselle!"

She turned as though to resume her seat. Something in the face of the newcomer, however, seemed to restrain her, and with a toss of the head she retired behind the toilet-table. There was a little laugh from the curtained doorway of an inner room.

"It takes you, mademoiselle, to manage Nanette!"

Gisella turned sharply as there came fluttering toward her, like a lily springing from the matted grass of a swamp, a little figure, golden-haired and clad in a riding-habit of stiff and glistening duck.

"Sit down just a moment, mademoiselle, do! while I finish dressing. You are in no hurry, I suppose?" And she turned to take her hat of stiff white straw from the hand of her unwilling maid.

Gisella shook her head. "I am sorry, madame, but monsieur the marquis sent me upstairs to fetch some accounts from his private safe. He is waiting for them now."

The little marquise laughed again.

"Oh, Olivier! He can wait, I am sure, he and his accounts! Sit down, mademoiselle; I want to talk with you about something really important. Urgent private affairs, you see!"

Gisella sank slowly in a seat, tapping impatiently with the pen in her hand and gazing with the half-scornful, half-envious eyes of the toiler upon the dainty and useless little creature before her. "How would you put on this hat, mademoiselle? Tilted over my nose, so? Or straight on top—that way? *Mon Dieu*, how difficult it is sometimes to make up one's mind!"

Gisella could no longer restrain her impatience. "Madame the marquise, would it be impertinent to ask, is this the urgent affair that you wished to see me about?"

The transparent face before her clouded in sudden irritation. "Ah, mademoiselle, how vexatious of you, when I had forgotten all about it for an instant. Very well, now you must listen very attentively. You see, I need some money—dreadfully!"

Involuntarily Gisella glanced toward the maid, who pressed her thin lips in an amused smile, echoed by the child-like laugh from her mistress's rosy mouth. "Oh, Nanette? Don't worry about her; I tell her everything—don't I, Nanette? Oh, see how shocked she looks, poor Mademoiselle Varney!"

"But you were saying, madame—" Gisella interposed.

"Oh, yes. Well, you see all these Spring and Summer clothes—" She waved her hand toward the tumbled heaps. "They don't look like much, now, you see—but they cost money! Then these new linen habits, which I simply had to have, for there isn't anything that anyone can do in this forsaken hole of the provinces except ride—now, is there? Not that I don't love to ride, because I do, and everybody admires me when I am in my saddle; still, it would be a good deal more amusing to live in Paris, wouldn't it? And it would hardly cost a scrap more to have a nice house on the Parc Monceau, than to live here in the prov-

inces with all these ridiculous charitable fads of Olivier's—now would it, mademoiselle?"

She paused for breath, while with negligent hands the smiling Nanette pinned about her hat a flowing veil of white chiffon, through which her pink cheeks and blue eyes gleamed with the fresh innocence of a baby. Gisella, who had listened to the long complaint with the mild air of one to whom it was tolerably familiar, brought her back to the subject in hand with calm insistence.

"Then it is the bills for those new habits and clothes, madame, that are worrying you?"

The marquise wriggled uneasily. "Don't say a word, my dear! But, you see, that last visit of mine to Paris—I was really terribly unlucky. Every time the races went against me, and it's especially aggravating, because I detest the Grand-Prix anyway, and only play the races because it's English and I have to be in the mode. But those women there in Paris that play all the time—what chance has a poor little country girl like me against them?"

"So it is for these racing debts, madame, that you want me to find you some money?"

"Oh, mademoiselle, can you? Because really it's two months now—and I don't dare show my nose in Paris or Trouville either, till they're paid, though mamma keeps writing me every day to come as soon as I can. It's terrible, you see! For the past month, I have not slept a single wink. . . . *Mon Dieu*, Nanette, you forgot to give me any pink lip-salve. Here, just a shade. No, I will do it myself. . . . There! Now I am finished, and really I think I look quite nice. . . . But oh, mademoiselle, whatever shall I do!"

"About the bills? Madame, how can I advise you?"

The marquise sat down upon an opera-wrap of white lace, trailing across a chair, and turned a pensively admiring eye upon the little foot in its black varnished leather riding-boot that showed itself below the hem of her short white skirt. "My gauntlets,

Nanette. There—that new box of white dogskin gloves, that came from Paris yesterday.” . . . Nanette, dropping on one knee by her mistress’s side, began to rub the stiff white gloves with relentless vigor upon the narrow, yielding hands. Madame de Lys raised wide eyes, full of amusement to the dark-browed face before her. “Yes, mademoiselle, this is the point, you see! You know all my husband’s business affairs, working with him every day, and you are such an old friend of his, and all—and you have so much influence over him, and everything—and really, you see, I don’t dare to go to him with any more bills, because last month when he paid that bill of Clément’s, I promised him that it should be the last till Autumn, anyway—”

“Eleven thousand, three hundred and forty-three francs,” observed the secretary with calm precision.

“Oh, *was* it as much as that? I am sure that it wasn’t . . . Well, perhaps! Of course, that was when we were in Paris, and when we are there I feel it my duty to dress decently, just to show people that I haven’t turned completely into a little savage, living down here in the virgin forest of Touraine for three-quarters of the year!” She paused and pondered. “But in any case, that doesn’t alter the fact of these new bills, does it, now?—that is, some of them are new bills and some of them are old, that I forgot to give to Olivier last Spring. Well, I—I didn’t dare to give them, that’s the truth, you know, and I am sure nobody could blame me for being afraid of him, with all those grand superior airs of his—now, confess, mademoiselle, aren’t you afraid of him, too?”

Gisella sighed in some weariness. “Yes, beyond a doubt, madame. But these new bills—what is the amount, please?”

The marquise hesitated, then laughed in a sort of giddy defiance. “Somewhere about twenty thousand francs, I believe,” she whispered with a little mock shudder of terror.

Gisella rose to her feet. “Madame, not twenty thousand francs!”

For a moment there was silence, while Nanette clicked her glove-buttoner in the palm of her mistress’s gauntlet. Gisella threw out her hand in a gesture of sudden pain. “Twenty thousand francs—I wonder, madame, do you know what that means?”

The marquise shrugged one shoulder, with an airy upward glance. “Two tailormades, three morning robes, six hats—and a few other little things!”

“Madame,” responded Gisella, “it means these things for you, beyond a doubt—but for monsieur the marquis it means the giving up of the building of the new model cottages for his people; and for the peasants themselves it means long years of waiting for the benefits which monsieur meant to secure for them this Summer!”

The face of Madame de Lys, which at the first count of the indictment had been overshadowed with a faint touch of remorse, flushed in sudden vexation at Gisella’s closing words.

“The peasants!” she cried with a sudden stamp of her spurred heel which rang sharply upon the floor. “Of them, I think, I have heard enough! It is humane, of course, to buy brandy for old Father Gobard, and baby linen for Lisette. But the Marquise de Lys—there’s no reason for anyone spending a sou on her!”

Gisella looked at her in surprise, and the marquise laughed in some embarrassment at her own violence. “No, of course I was only joking—but you see, mademoiselle, Olivier and I were married under the régime of the community of goods; my dowry goes into the estate, and he pays my bills. And these bills aren’t so dreadful, are they?”

Gisella met her gaze steadily. “Madame, you may perhaps have forgotten the circumstance; but I told you in May when we settled those last bills, that the income of your dowry, paid at the New Year by madame your mother, was already overdrawn. These new expenses, consequently, fall entirely upon Monsieur de Lys. And as you know, the business is already heavily encumbered with the burden of these new improvements, to say nothing of that

absurd strike last month, which set us back so badly. Every franc, income and expenditure, is counted upon for months to come. And now this extra expense, coming so unexpectedly for the second time this year, you see——”

Madame de Lys sighed and she flicked the dust from the altar-lace of her toilet-table with faint touches of her riding-whip. “I suppose,” she remarked pensively, “that Olivier will be angry with me—angry like a jaguar who is eating cotton-wool!”

The secretary remained silent. The marquise shot her blue orbs at her, with a keenness suddenly out of keeping with their infantile directness of gaze. “I suppose,” she murmured very sweetly, “that it would not be possible for—anyone just to take those twenty thousand francs and charge a thousand here for extra furnace coal, a thousand francs there for extra sand or chemicals or something—would it, I wonder?”

She smiled with bewitching guilelessness. The secretary’s handsome face turned a shade paler as she shook her head.

“No, madame, I do not think that it would be possible.”

“Ah!” the marquise sighed, “it’s too bad, because that would be such an easy way to pay it, without vexing Olivier, or putting out anybody. But still, as you say, it might be awkward, and then, you see, it might be found out. And if there is anything I hate, it is to be caught in a lie!”

There was a rap upon the door. “The horse of madame the marquise waits at the main entrance!”

The marquise sprang to her feet in evident relief. “Then I must be going! Here are the bills, dear Mademoiselle Varney. You’ll give them to him, won’t you? And immediately, please, so that his first rage can be blown over before I get home!”

She thrust the bundle of crumpled documents into the secretary’s unwilling hands. “Here, you see, here they are! And now——” She turned to take a final survey of her toilette in the high gilded mirror that hung over the

fireplace. There, reflected side by side, stood the two women—the little marquise, artificial and exquisite; her brow unseamed by thought but crowned with a profusion of waving fair hair; her figure and face touched alike with a perfection, airy, yet vivid—a delicate, wind-blown pose, a transient rosiness of beauty, like an apple-tree in May. Beside this curled and polished loveliness, the plainly dressed form of Gisella could challenge only a second glance—yet that glance could not but reveal, to the unprejudiced observer, that of the two women it was the dependent who held his eye. Beside the long slim curves of her black-clad figure, the marquise’s little form appeared that of a small and over-dressed doll; and the clear olive bloom of her cheeks struck into relief a curious gaslight quality of the delicately-powdered face beside her—the scarlet pigment upon the lips, the faint bluish shadows about the eyes. Yet it was not perhaps Gisella’s physical richness and vigor that formed the dominating note of her presence, so much as a certain fire and energy that stamped her clear-cut face with a life more vivid than all its brilliancy of mantling blood. Her fresh red lips were pressed together in a firm line which seemed designed to stiffen into cold resolution the soft fulness of their curves; from under high-arched brows her large brown eyes looked out with a gaze at once keen and far-away, searching as it were through distant spaces, like the eyes of a mountaineer. Altogether the face of an enthusiast, of a worker; a face from which all womanly softness was painfully burnt out by the breath of some fierce intellectual purpose—yet which, in its very strength, suggested a hundred vulnerable points of over-sensitized perceptions and passions too sharply suppressed.

Madame de Lys glanced at the two reflections; first at her own elegant figure, then, in a quick comparison too transparent to be misunderstood, at the other form confronting her from the mirror. At the unspoken impertinence of her thought, Gisella flushed hotly; then she lifted her dark eyes and met

the other's disparaging gaze with a look of cold indifference. For an instant the eyes of each woman clashed with the reflected glance of the other; then the marquise broke the silence with a sudden little laugh.

"Wouldn't you like to be me, mademoiselle!"

Gisella started, and turning from the mirror answered the question with sudden, unexpected emphasis.

"No, madame, I would not!"

The little woman stared, shrugged her delicate shoulders, then turned away with a toss of her head. "Very well, we will not discuss that matter. You will give those bills to the marquis, mademoiselle, before I get home from my ride?"

"Yes, madame, I will."

II

THE horse was taken away through the arched roadway that led to the stables, while the Marquise de Lys, her riding-whip in her hand, walked slowly up the wide steps of carved sandstone to the great door of the château. The afternoon was June; and in the sunlit haze of the early Summer, the weather-beaten walls and turrets appeared touched with something of the vague and shadowy charm of the vines, which obscured the heavy angles with their clinging green. For a moment Violette stood regarding with discontented eyes the pale-green, fertile sweep of valley before her, with the blue stream of the Loire winding down between poplars and overhanging willows to the group of whitewashed factory buildings beyond. Toward these buildings, and toward the clustering red and white of the little village around them, the marquise stretched out a sudden vindictive fist.

"You are so conceited and so deliciously pleased with yourself, down there—but I hate you! yes, I hate you like fish on Sundays!" she whispered with a kind of childish ferocity. Then, as the footman flung the door wide open upon her dramatic attitude, she dropped

her hand with a sidelong, helpless glance, and an embarrassed little laugh. The man, a loosely built young Norman, grinned at her with hardly concealed familiarity.

Violette laughed again, then drew herself up with an attempt at dignity.

"Monsieur the marquis is in his library, Hector?"

"Yes, madame, he is in his library, monsieur the marquis, with mademoiselle and the steam-engines!"

With a toss of her head, Violette traversed the long, tapestried hallway, with its faded banners and rusty suits of mail. Pausing with a grimace before a carved doorway of ancient oak, she lifted the heavy bronze latch and floated with a little defiant laugh into the shadows of the room beyond.

The apartment which the marquise entered was dark and high, with vaulted arches of carved cedar, elaborately wrought, and walls lined to the ceiling with the faded gold tooling of uncounted rows of books. The tiled floor was covered with skins of wild beasts; the chimney, glowing with the florid tints of the house, formed a single spot of color in the shadowed richness of the room. The feudal magnificence of the setting, however, was curiously marred by a long work-table of unpainted pine, upon which lay scattered detached wheels and bars of steel, tin vessels of sand and broken glass, and various retorts of chemicals, while in the corner by the window, the owner of the room applied himself with passionate interest to the regulating of a Bunsen burner beneath a tiny furnace with whirring wheels and many glowing holes. Violette stood with a delicately curled lip, as the experimenter, unmindful of her entrance, extracted from one of these rosy orifices a small and fiery transparency which he proceeded with the aid of a long pair of pinchers to mold into fantastic shapes. Miss Varney, sitting beside the table with her typewriting machine, watched the process with absorbed attention.

"At the point of fusion, mademoiselle, at the point of vitreous fusion, you

have that? The glass prepared with Hungarian silica begins to show ——”

Violette broke in upon the proceedings with a little shrill laugh of irritation.

“You don’t seem to pay much attention to me, either of you!” she observed shortly.

Miss Varney rose with a silent bow, while the chemist, his mind still obviously busy with his interrupted calculation, looked up slowly.

“How are you, Violette—did you have a pleasant ride?” he asked with laborious politeness, while Gisella sat down again quietly at her machine.

“Not bad!” retorted Violette with an airy shrug—“though there’s not a hedge here at Héraucourt that’s worth leaping, and one gets tired of always cantering along the same little bridle-paths, you see!” She paused with a smiling twitch of her lip.

Her husband’s face contracted. “You don’t mean to tell me, Violette, that you have been putting Fâtime over the hedges again?”

Violette nodded faintly, smiling like a malicious elf. “It amuses me so much!” she said.

The marquis’s handsome face relaxed as he regarded her with something of the expression with which one regards a wilful child. “Listen, *chérie*,” he said; “I am very content to hear that you enjoyed yourself. But how often have I told you, Fâtime has not knees for that sort of thing? And you, Violette, your heart is none too strong for such violent exercise. Do you want to put an end to this little life of yours, some day?”

Violette shrugged her shoulders again. “I don’t know,” she said, “that my life is so amusing.”

Involuntarily Gisella glanced at the husband, but his firm-set face betrayed no sign. “Will you forgive my rudeness, Violette, if I ask you to sit down for a few moments while we finish this experiment? It will soon be done, I hope.”

Violette perched herself airily upon the arm of a large settle of Flemish leather—part of the booty which some

thrifty and noble ancestor of her husband’s had brought back in bygone days from the sack of Ghent; and inside the fragile beauty of her little head seethed thoughts of scornful amusement. That a gentleman who might at this moment be enjoying the delights of Paris or of Auteuil should shut himself up in his library with tubes of acid and noisy little machines, was one of the mysteries which she had given up trying to understand. So far as her husband’s tastes regulated her own life, she rebelled against them as unceasingly as against a wilful freak of fate. To be sure, he conditioned for only one-half the year to be spent here at his ancient château of Touraine, with his peasants and his ancestral glass-works; and even for the half-year she herself was left tolerably free to come and go as she pleased. But even those few months, even this present moment of retirement from the world she adored, appeared to her now as a fatal loss wrought by unbearable tyranny. True little Parisian that she was, she shut her eyes in a gust of rebellious contempt against the mullioned window before her, and its glimpse of the winding blue Loire with its yellow sands and pale-green sloping hills. The sparkle of the Boulevards, the elegance of the Bois and the delicious intimacy of a stolen five-o’clock at the Café de la Paix—it seemed to her that the landscape which tore her from these joys was laughing in her face with conscious impudence.

“You are bored, my poor little Violette!” she said to herself in a sudden gust of self-pity, “oh, but bored enough to drink water, my faith!” And turning in her chair with a sudden yawn, her roving eye caught sight of a docket of folded papers on the table near by her.

The bills, yes, the bills, which a few hours before she had given to Gisella, and which since then had almost disappeared from her mind. Yes, there were those debts to be reckoned with, of course! For two whole months she was shut up here in this provincial hole of Touraine, not only to be bored, but to be scolded as well! She wriggled impatiently upon her seat.

"What is that thing you are playing with there, Olivier?" she asked, with a sudden inflection of peevishness in her soft voice.

The marquis did not glance up from the thermometer in his hand, but Gisella answered respectfully,

"This, madame, is the last stage of a new process by which monsieur the marquis hopes to temper our Syrian glassware so that——"

"Oh!" Violette cut her short with a yawn, and the speaker, with heightened color, returned to her work. For a few moments the marquise sat waiting, tapping her high boot with the jeweled riding-whip in her hand. Then suddenly the delicate glowing mass which the experimenter with his pincers extracted from the furnace, cracked and shattered under his touch into a heap of glittering fragments; and with a quiet gesture of baffled purpose, de Lys rose to his feet.

"It's no use, we still fall six millimetres short of the Bastic process. Tomorrow, perhaps, things will go better." His voice, vibrant and deeply toned by nature, was carefully modulated into a kind of weary softness. His high, stern features were for the moment touched with a regret profound, yet whimsical—the disappointment of the worker who sees that his day's toil has come to nothing, yet who is willing to acknowledge that after all it is of slight importance whether he fail or succeed. Gisella watched him with a fierce intensity in her dark eyes. The expression in Madame de Lys's face had not escaped her; and what her employer did not resent for himself she resented for him with quick indignation.

"Don't go, Mademoiselle Varney!" cried the marquis in sudden trepidation, as her eye wandered back to the docket of bills upon the table. Gisella smiled sweetly, with a flash of dimples in her richly tinted cheeks that contrasted oddly with the shadowy sternness of her beautiful eyes. "I am sorry, madame," she replied demurely, "but the work must be done, you see! Will you have the goodness to excuse me, please?"

With a quick bow to the two whom she left behind, Gisella gathered her papers together and walked from the room. Husband and wife, left together, confronted each other for a moment in silence; then the marquis's eyes, meeting the mocking defiance of his wife's gaze, filled with a sudden reproachful sadness.

"Now, I suppose you are going to scold me?" she observed airily.

Her husband regarded her in silence.

"Well, please, Olivier, whatever you are going to say, please say it quickly, and have it done with! I can bear being preached at, but what I cannot bear is to be looked at as though I were swinging from a gallows!"

"I am not scolding you, Violette."

"Ah, aren't you? Well, these bills!" She picked up the folded papers from the desk, and thrust them into his hand. "Yes, I am extravagant, I know, but I must have a few things to wear! And if you have to give up building the new cottages down there in the villages, as Mademoiselle Varney said you would have to, then I am very sorry, but I can't help it. And really, I think, when anybody comes to consider it, I am really of as much importance as a lot of stupid peasants and absurd pieces of glass!"

Her voice slid off into a pathetic droop, like an injured baby. De Lys shook his head slowly as he looked over the bills in his hand, then upon the appended schedule with the bald simplicity of its sum total. The slight gesture, wordless though it was, seemed to convey a complete and irritating meaning to the eyes of his watching wife.

"Oh, yes, call me names, Olivier! Of course, you paid eleven thousand francs for me last month—and of course, it's terrible of me to bring you twenty thousand more to pay for me now in June—and I meant never to get another rag until September. But still one can't go about in one's chemise, and I was really very economical! Look—this riding-habit! Don't you think it is chic?"

His eye fell like water around the

slim and glistening outlines of her form. In his regard there was a calm austerity of judgment, an absence of admiration or of blame which to the volatile temperament of Violette seemed more annoying than the most outspoken disapproval.

"And you call it fair," she cried with a little laugh of displeasure, "to sit there and think things of me, all to yourself, and never give me a chance to say anything back in my own defense? Whatever you think of me, say it, say it!" She leaned back in her chair, her lips still laughing, her eyes touched with a smiling fear. Her husband picked up her riding-whip from the table where she had flung it, and examined the quaintly jeweled ivory which formed the handle. A tall, firmly built man, with slow gestures and eyes habitually cast down, speech seemed difficult to him.

"My dear Violette," he said, "what is there for me to say to you? You are no child. You know as well as I what must be the result of these unexpected bills coming down upon us." He flung the riding-whip suddenly away. "What is the use of talking about it, Violette?"

The marquise's eyes lit up with brisk petulance. Before the wall of her husband's silence she was weaponless, but now his words, however slight, afforded a breach for the entry of her attack and defense.

"I suppose," she replied with a long breath of preparation, "that you mean our dear friends in the village will have to go without shower-baths and Turkish carpets for a while longer, and eat their dinner out of wooden plates instead of pink Dresden with gold edges. Oh, Olivier, if only you knew how sick I am of all this craze of yours." She paused for a moment, shooting a quick eye at her husband. "Of course, Olivier," she went on with an inflection of patronizing dignity, "I understand your point of view, and the way you feel about these things. When I married you I used to think it was quite splendid, and so did mamma, to hear you talk about the sufferings of

humanity and the regeneration of the world, and the splendid new time that was coming when everybody was to have a louis in his pocket and be perfectly polite and nice to everybody else. But now you see it looks different, near at hand! For you see for yourself, now, what I am expected to take such an interest in—flints and metallic oxides, and horrid workmen in blue blouses, that get up strikes and smell of cider to poison a south wind!"

De Lys considered for a moment. "Yes," he returned, "I understand your point. To try to do something for those poor creatures is, of course, less agreeable and picturesque than to talk about it. But don't you see, the more ignorant and degraded I find these poor people of mine, the more they prove their need of me? Peasants and *verrierie*, people and glass-works, they come to me as a sacred inheritance out of the past—to me, a pledged apostle of that better day which we all hope to see. You don't want me to desert my post, do you, *chérie*?"

Violette heard him in silence through his speech, an unusually long one for him. His reasoning, through frequent repetition of the past, fell now upon her as unprofitably as so much rain. She had heard so much of the burdens of the world, and the better day that was coming! And though filled with a quick shrinking from visible pain which made it for her an instinctive act to give a penny to a beggar or a cake to a hungry child, she was without the imaginative grasp necessary for those who interest themselves in far-reaching schemes of good. For her, these humanitarian schemes of her husband were associated with a restriction in gloves and millinery, and whole months spent in the seclusion of the country.

"I shouldn't complain, Olivier, if all these plans of yours ever came to anything. But what's the use of petting up these ungrateful wretches? Just look at this Spring, with the *verrierie* shut down for six weeks, as

close as my shoe. Poor old Olivier, that's all they care for you, and that's all the good your fifteen years' work has done. You are wasting your time here, and you're the only person that can't see it, *mignon!*"

Olivier turned away his head in silence and examined the whirring rim of the cog-wheel of his model. He said nothing; but a slight stiffening of the muscles of his face showed how nearly his pride was touched by this reflection upon the value of his work. Violette smiled gleefully, like a child who has succeeded in leaving the mark of its fingernail upon a stone; and with triumphant pride she dug again.

"Of course, Olivier, I know what you would say—they are misguided, poor things, by their leaders, and the unions that have crept into our poor France. But really, you know, there is something to be said on both sides of every question—and do you know, my dear, it seems to me as if perhaps their leaders were not such fools, after all?"

At this sudden assumption of wisdom on the part of Violette, her husband glanced up from his work.

"Since when, my dear Violette, have you become an authority on the nature of labor-leaders?"

"Since this afternoon!" Violette flung back her reply with a smile of gleeful triumph. "Quite a charming excitement, my dear! Out there by the churchyard on the other side of the village I was riding along by myself, and I saw such a handsome young man coming along on the other side of the road." She glanced sideways at her husband, to note the effect of her words. To her joy, a frown contracted his level brows.

"You were riding alone, unattended, Violette?"

She nodded. "Why not? One can't be always bothered with a groom following along like a spy. So, as Pierre had the impertinence to saddle one of the horses and follow along behind me, I permitted myself the pleasure of dismissing him, and riding along by your dear Loire alone."

The marquis shook his head. "My dear Violette, you know how many reasons there are for a lady in your position to ride only with proper escort! To say nothing of this troublesome little heart of yours——"

Violette tossed her golden head. "My dear Olivier, always serious as a papa! Yes, certainly, I will be good in the future—but listen! I was telling you of my handsome stranger—for of course, you see, I couldn't let a chance for amusement slip by me in a half-dead place like this. So I just took out my hat-pin and dug it into Fâtime. Then I screamed, and fainted a little bit. And then, of course, I let him save me. We talked for a while, and of course I couldn't ride back to the village again alone, so he walked by Fâtime's head and led her for me—quite a picture we made, I assure you! And he was so nice and had such lovely brown eyes, and quite the gentleman, too, I assure you! And now, my dear, who do you suppose it was?"

De Lys turned toward her a face set in lines of grave and tolerant severity. "Violette! you allowed this man, this stranger, to walk with you——?"

"Oh, don't be stupid, Olivier. And anyway, the joke is on you—because he wasn't a stranger at all. He was your friend Gaston Boldenave; what do you think of that?"

This time the marquis's immobile face lit and changed with a sudden and unmistakable gust of feeling. "Violette, you know who that man is?"

She smiled in delighted triumph. "Yes, certainly, my angel, I recognized the name at once! The little man that made all the trouble last April, when I was in Paris. But then, you see, I don't see why I should be down on him for that, because he approves of strikes and you don't. And if he believes in strikes, why shouldn't he live up to his ideals and go around and get them up, wherever he can? And you know, it's what you're always preaching yourself, that everyone has a right to his opinion in this world!"

"My dear Violette, listen to me!

You do not know this man Boldenave, because he left Héraucourt the year before you came here. But I know him well, from childhood. He was a boy here in the village—a bright little rascal, and my poor father took a fancy to him. He sent the little chap to the Polytechnique, and had him trained as an electrical engineer; then when he was eighteen he put him into the *verrière*, with promise of an indefinite rise. Gaston stuck at his work for a few years, but steady employment was too much for him. My father forgave him and took him back, again and again; and when I came into possession I tried to keep it up, for my father's sake. But it was impossible—utterly impossible; so I let him go! If you had heard his language, Violette, when he took leave of me! So, having a distaste for work, and a fluent and active mouth, he gave up his trade as too laborious, and took up the infinitely easier task of urging other men to give up their work as well. Naturally, when the time came, he watched his first opportunity for revenge on me. Last Spring he came here as a delegate from the union at Paris; and it was entirely owing to him that our poor fellows, here in our ancient old Touraine, were dragged into the up-to-date horrors of that absurd sympathetic strike—and we ran two months behind in our contracts, and lost a hundred and ninety thousand francs. Now, my Violette, are you satisfied?"

The marquise threw up her head airily. "I am satisfied, *chéri*, that you are not so broad-minded as you always pretend to be. You hate this Monsieur Boldenave just because you don't approve of his theories about things in general. Very well; he doesn't approve of yours! And when I see these theories of yours leading a gentleman, with a title from his father and a fortune from his mother, to shut himself up in the country, and work like a bourgeois manufacturer—oh, you needn't explain to me that when your glass-works were founded, no bourgeois was allowed to make as

much as a glass drinking-cup! Yes, when your theories lead you to such absurdities, it isn't only Monsieur Boldenave that doesn't approve of them; neither, you see, do I!"

The marquise held to his point stubbornly. "My dear Violette, please be sensible. Outside of all business relations, I happen to know that Gaston Boldenave is no better than a common vagabond, overlaid with a little cheap swagger of the Latin Quarter. Promise me, my dear friend, that you will not speak to him again!"

Violette smiled provokingly. "Oh, so far as promises go, I will promise anything you please. Ah!" she sank back in her chair, her left hand pressed to her bosom and the sudden pallor of her face brought her husband to her side in quick alarm.

"Violette, you are ill?"

The marquise drew her tinted lips into a resolute and defiant smile. "No, I am not, and my ride has not brought on a heart attack, though I can see you are dying to tell me that it has!" With a little fluttering laugh she rose a trifle unsteadily to her feet. "And now, my dear, dearest Olivier, to go back to business—you will have Mademoiselle Varney send the cheques to those milliners and people tonight, won't you? And you'll give me that cheque for fifteen thousand francs to send to mamma to settle those little Grand-Prix accounts for me, won't you, my angel?"

Her voice sank low and coaxing, as she marshaled all the weapons of her beauty and her weakness before her husband's eyes. "So these are not all, Violette; fifteen thousand more?"

The marquise slid from the great settle, whose dark embossed leather formed so effective a background for the white and gold of her dainty figure. "If you are going to begin scolding again," she observed, while her small face flushed in a sudden gust of vexation, "then I'm off! But if you don't mind, then I'll just beg you to remember that I have a few rights, as well as other people! You shut yourself up in this dreary hole of Touraine, my faith;

you expect me to give you my company for weeks and months at a time, and when I do go to Paris, you are disgusted if I allow myself the amusements of my rank or if I buy a few chic toilettes to support my station. *Eh bien*, my friend, it is a pity that instead of marrying a lady of the French nobility, you had not directed your parents' choice toward a little Anglo-Saxon prude like your dear Mademoiselle Varney!"

Her husband interrupted her sternly. "The name of that young lady, if you please, we will leave out of the conversation. I owe too large a debt to her, and too much respect to the memory of her grandfather, to enjoy hearing any slighting remarks made upon her. . . . And now, pardon me, you were saying——"

Violette tossed her head. "I was only remarking, that if you refuse me all of the amusements that rightfully belong to me, then I give you fair warning that I will go to Trouville with mamma; or else I will go to work and amuse myself in my own way here!"

As her husband regarded her, his anger relaxed with an air of unamazed and weary patience that showed the scene to be one to which he was well accustomed. "I am sorry if I spoke harshly to you, Violette," he said with some dignity, "and this kind of thing between us all the time can lead to nothing but unhappiness. So we will try to do better in the future, sha'n't we, *chérie*? And you will help me a little instead of putting me back? Because, indeed, as you know, these schemes of mine lie very close to my heart."

The marquise made no answer, as the little tantalizing smile on her carmine lips dissolved suddenly into a thin line of pain. Her small gauntleted hand flew to her side with her former gesture of distress, and the heavy uncut turquoises of her whip handle crashed suddenly against the marble tiles of the floor. De Lys, starting forward, supported her relaxing form in his arms and threw down the richly furnished spaces of the dim apartment a dis-

tracted glance seeking for aid that did not come. "Mademoiselle Varney!" he cried in a quick, involuntary appeal which even in his present alarm touched his self-consciousness with a sudden curious shock of self-revelation. "Mademoiselle Gisella! Mademoiselle! are you there?"

The hall door opened and the Norman footman precipitated himself into the room. "Monsieur the marquis called for someone?" he cried in an alarm which scattered his professional decorum to the winds; and when his master in quick accents had directed him to bring mademoiselle as quickly as possible, to summon the maids and telephone for a doctor, his heavy steps were heard in urgent obedience scattering the echoes across the vaulted spaces of the great hall.

The marquis laid the little lifeless form upon the Flemish settle from which it had so lately and so airily risen, chafed the hands and tried with ineffectual fingers to loosen some of the intricate fastenings of the trim white habit. Then the door was flung back and quick footsteps came hurrying across the floor; he rose from his task with a sudden uncontrollable sigh of relief. "Ah, mademoiselle! Quick, help me! Rub her hands, while I go for her medicine!" Then as Gisella, obedient, fell on her knees beside the settle, the marquis lifted a distressed face.

"No, mademoiselle, you are quick on your feet; you may run upstairs for me. Look in the mother-of-pearl cabinet on Madame de Lys's toilet-table—here is the key . . . No, you will find the ring there on her table, and choose the tiny gold key with the two diamonds in the wards. Fetch me the second drawer of the cabinet. Quick, fly!"

When Gisella returned from her breathless errand she found the door thronged with whispering servants, and Nanette, pale-faced, kneeling beside her mistress's limp form. The marquis took the tiny drawer from his messenger's hand, selected from its contents an infinitesimal globule of glass, and snapped the stem between his strong white fingers. A strange odor,

fierce and pungent, was wafted through the air of the apartment, as de Lys held the broken crystal with its contents beneath the nostrils of his unconscious wife. The scarlet lips, whose metallic tints shone with a tawdry brilliance against the death-like pallor of the face, opened and closed themselves obediently. Then their corners twitched, a faint shade of color stirred in the white cheeks, and finally the fluttering lashes raised themselves languidly to disclose the distended pupils of two large eyes.

The marquis uttered a long sigh of relief. "Ah, Violette! You have given us a pretty fright, upon my word. Here, drink this water—" But after a single swallow, the patient pushed away his hand with a little laugh.

"I'm quite well now," she whispered faintly; then, her voice gathering strength with her returning life and color, she raised herself slowly to a sitting position. "Ridiculous!" she said slowly. "Just one of my little heart attacks, Olivier—nothing to look so solemn about!"

"I must look solemn, Violette, when your violent riding leads to such results as this! Suppose this came over you when you were out in the forest, or when there was no one by to give you your nitrate of amyl—what would happen then?" Suddenly, as he observed the ring of listeners by the door, the marquis broke off with sudden gentle dignity. "But I will not lecture you now, poor child!" He turned to the waiting servants. "Take your mistress to her room, Nanette, and see that she is made comfortable. Violette, my dear, I will come to inquire about you in half an hour."

The marquise rose unsteadily to her feet. "I'm quite able to walk!" she cried, with childlike peevishness, "and I don't intend to have any fuss made, I can tell you that, Olivier. I'll be down to dinner, probably. And now, *au revoir*, my friend!"

As the marquise, leaning upon Nanette's arm, fluttered feebly from the room, the secretary returned in flushed silence to the refuge of her typewriter.

And Olivier de Lys, sighing, bent his tall form again over the mysteries of his model furnaces and glowing transparencies of crystal.

III

It was late that evening before Gisella, with notes in order and calculations made, returned to the library where she and her employer spent long hours of toil together. Dinner was over—a dinner splendidly served but uncommonly ill-cooked, even for the Château of Lys-de-Héraucourt, where the lack of an overseeing eye on the part of the chatelaine had reduced the well-trained Parisian servants to a state of demoralization.

The marquise herself had retired to her boudoir to smoke cigarettes and gossip with her maid. With the wonderful elasticity often found in the most fragile frames, she had already seemed to recover her normal airy vivacity, and flew up the staircase with a laugh of delicate mockery at her husband's urgent warnings of prudence. Gisella, on the other hand, felt her strong young body weighed down by lassitude. Her limbs still trembled from the shock of the painful scene in the library, from which the victim herself had so lightly recovered; and her head ached from the strain of her accounts, which, with the suddenly enforced economies, had been uncommonly long and laborious. And now, as she walked slowly through the vaulted shadows of the library toward the far corner where stood her desk, she glanced with troubled sympathy toward the raised shoulders and bowed head of Olivier de Lys.

The shaded lamp above his head made a glowing shaft of light, under which he sat as in a little world of his own, cut off from the darkness of the surrounding room. Among the outer shadows Gisella sat down mute and motionless, looking in with strangely humble eyes upon the ruddy circle beneath the great silver lamp.

Her position toward her employer was not, however, one to make neces-

sary an attitude so lacking in self-assertion. For not only was she possessed of intellectual and administrative gifts to make her a partner rather than an assistant in the marquis's schemes of industrial philanthropy, but her family was, outside of the detail of material possessions, as honorable and as dignified as his own. For this little American exile, working for her daily bread in this remote corner of ancient France, was born of a race which the New World willingly recognizes as its nobility; and this pure and ancient strain showed itself not only in the delicate finish of her bodily contours, but also in the unbending and silent courage of her spirit.

Her grandfather, Robert Varney, from whom she inherited her tastes and her enthusiasms, had been a member of one of those New England families whose pride of ancient Puritan descent forms a bulwark of class-prejudice as unyielding and as fiercely localized as that of the Mandarin, and whose inherited worship of a stern ideal breaks out through different generations in strange and unexpected ardors. In an age when all the world was running mad over the revolutionary doctrines of the French reformers, Robert Varney had proclaimed himself a convert to the new forms of social belief. And to emphasize the completeness of his change of heart, he had horrified his family and friends by suddenly taking as his wife a young Italian girl, the daughter of Sicilian immigrants newly arrived in the North End of Boston. This marriage, contracted in the generous heat of theoretical revolt, had been short and stormy; until, a year after the birth of her son, the young wife had quietly disappeared in the company of a banana merchant from Honduras. For her husband the blow had been severe; for a time he retired utterly from the world until the news of his wife's assassination of her lover and subsequent suicide seemed to startle him from his lethargy. With renewed energy he returned to his chosen labors; and before he had passed middle life he had attained a position of considerable influence as a

writer and practical worker in the field of industrial reform.

In the free and unvisionary soil of America, however, the seed of his idealistic heresies bore little fruit. And at last, under the impulse of urgent invitations from various French admirers, he transplanted his small household and smaller material possessions from Beacon Hill to a modest apartment of the Latin Quarter. His only son—the deserted child of the Sicilian peasant-woman—had by this time grown up, married a girl from one of the most rigid Boston families, and finally died after a short and self-indulgent life. This daughter-in-law, cold-shouldered by her family after her marriage with a socialist and a bohemian—this quiet, sad young widow and her little daughter, formed Varney's sole companions in his final exile to a soil more congenial to the dominating purpose of his life. In the dingy apartment near the Sorbonne, the little Boston girl had spent a brief and austere widowhood, and after her death, the old man had himself continued the work of his little granddaughter's education. To this child he had, by some curious resurgence of fancy, insisted upon bestowing the name of his recreant Sicilian wife; and it was with equal delight that he watched the development in this small namesake of the older Gisella's rich Latin tints and contours, as of his own keen force and intellectual energy.

The child's strange education left her, indeed, in painful need of all the poise and balance which nature had bestowed upon her. Upon the substructure of strict Congregational doctrine, bestowed upon her by her mother, had been imposed a kind of idealized materialism, a subjection of the means to the end, an exaltation of the individual judgment and the liberty and individual action—the result being a medley which often filled the girl's young mind with distress and confusion in meeting the practical, everyday questions of good and evil. Upon one point alone, however, her growing mind had found a reassuring harmony between the teachings of these two

beings upon whose philosophy of life she had learned to mould her own.

"My little girl," said her mother primly, "must never soil her lips with a lie"—a mandate comfortably identical with the often-repeated warning of the old enthusiast: "Remember, my child, if by a lie you could call heaven down here to earth, you would find that it was no longer heaven!" For the rest, there was hardly a possible contingency of life for which the young girl had not two revealed systems of law; so it was just as well, she often told herself in consolation, that the uniform monotony—she dared not say stupidity!—of her life gave her small necessity for choice.

Her life, indeed, despite its frequent change of scene, had run in curiously quiet and colorless channels. Her grandfather's disciples, eager young students and hoary social rebels from every part of Europe, appeared to her no more than the cogs of a noisy but necessary machine; until, when she was fifteen years of age, the old man's salon had one evening been honored by the introduction of the young Marquis of Lys-de-Héraucourt.

The quiet elegance of his manner, the splendor of his ancient name and of the large fortune inherited from the chocolate-boilers of his maternal grandfather—all these charms speedily subjugated the small circle into which his coming was as that of a young god. The girl alone remained silent in the general chorus of his praise; nevertheless, the bright glance of his gray eyes returned to haunt her sleep, as well as the touch of the respectful salute which he had placed upon her hand at parting.

And even her favorite books and necessary studies failed to dislodge from her mind its ceaseless speculations regarding his manner of life, the young wife that he had just married, and the ancient chateau of his family which he had bought back from the interlopers who had held it since the days of the Revolution.

After the first visit of this dazzling apparition, the young girl had never

expected the happiness of laying eyes upon him again; but, to her joy, he seemed to find in her grandfather's teachings and conversation a pleasure equal to the old man's satisfaction in seeing him. With all the idealism of his race, Olivier de Lys embraced the doctrines of visionary socialism and individual responsibility for the common good. And finally, in a progressive spirit of enthusiasm, he resolved to put his new industrial theories to the test of practical experience.

The glass works—the *verrière* which, under the ancient monopoly of the noblesse, his princely ancestors had carried on at their estates in Touraine—was still dragging on a feeble and formal life. The young marquis, after coming into full possession of his redeemed inheritance, applied himself to building up into modern commercial standing this quaint and outworn relic of pre-Revolutionary France. The old chateau on the banks of the Loire, designed by Leonardo and wrecked by the years of violence through which it had passed, was restored to more than its original beauty and splendor; the glass factories on the river-edge were rebuilt with modern machinery, with electricity and steam. And under the wise benevolence of the young seigneur, the poverty-stricken peasantry began to lift their heads in the pride of a new hope and prosperity.

These various tasks, however, had not been carried to success by the unassisted energy of the young marquis himself. From the first, he had constantly sought the aid and advice of his aged master; in the face of his wife's frivolous opposition and of all the alluring temptations placed in the path of the young Continental noble, he had felt need of the support and guidance of that aged but young-souled enthusiast. Finally, in response to an often-repeated and urgent invitation from his young adherent, Varney had broken up the little home in Paris and had come with his granddaughter to occupy the small house in the village of Héraucourt, which was offered for their use.

This change came when Gisella was in her eighteenth year. For her, what overwhelming, what almost painful joy to exchange the dark gables and noisy cobblestones of the ancient and airless Latin Quarter for the blue sky and green spaces, the sweet smells and silences of the country!

Toward the young marquis himself, as the author of this sudden happiness, she cherished a vague and adoring sentiment which she hardly tried to distinguish from her worship of heaven itself, bequeathed to her by her mother's creed.

The old man, ceaselessly occupied with the details of his young adherent's enterprise, suspected nothing of this tumultuous worship in his granddaughter's soul. To him, she was something between a child and a machine; and it was with unalloyed satisfaction that he finally saw her installed in their benefactor's library for stated hours every day, as the marquis's secretary and general assistant.

From this intimate association with a man whom he himself had taught her to regard as a pattern of strength and generosity, the old man had feared no disastrous results. Forgetful of the fierce passions which had led to the fiasco of his own youth, he had come to look back upon the affair through the medium, not of its causes, but of its effects; and because the woman for whom he had burnt out his heart had proved worthless, he had finally convinced himself that love itself was no more than a flame of straw. From her earliest childhood, Gisella had heard love mentioned only as an ignoble weakness, a derangement of the senses which turns men and women aside from the path of ambition and honor.

That the marriage was ill-sorted into which the wisdom of his guardians and the glamour of his own inexperienced youth had led him, had become evident not only to Olivier de Lys himself, but to all the friends around him, soon after the passing of the honeymoon. All the young husband's concessions and prudent concealments could not hide

from the world his wife's peevish tears over his declared purpose of becoming resident at his chateau. Not even half the year given over to the gaieties of Paris, or double the entire income of her dowry paid over for the expenses of her pleasures, were sufficient to satisfy the exactions of the young marquis. These constant drains upon his income and checks upon his ambition were borne by the marquis in silence; but that he must suffer was evident to all that knew him, though the extent of those sufferings they could but vaguely guess.

Thus a constantly quivering pity was added to Gisella's inherited worship of de Lys; and her grandfather's death, after three years' residence at Héraucourt, had left her completely alone in the world except for this kindly but dangerous friend. After the old man's death she had, as a matter of course, continued to occupy her lonely little cottage in the village, and to sit every day at the marquis's side in fulfilment of her former duties. The situation—impossible in the case of a young French girl—had, strange to say, in Gisella's case excited no suspicious comment; even the marquise herself, with a contemptuous little laugh at the absurd, unwomanly coldness of these American girls, made no objection to this daily association with her husband of a young woman in the first flush of a remarkable beauty and temperament.

Of all danger to herself, whether from within or without, Gisella was, not only by the circumstances of her training but by the strong simplicity of her nature, as unaware as her grandfather himself had been. Her passionate attachment to her fellow-worker presented itself to her imagination as a poignant and sublimated friendship, and any passing melancholies or vague virginal longings she attributed to the pain which she must feel at her own loneliness and the obvious and painful unhappiness of her friend. To see the self-confidence of the sensitive and ambitious soul constantly dimmed by the patter of Violette's cynicisms; to behold his far-reaching and unselfish schemes of good

always nipped and tossed aside by the encroachments of the marquise's selfish extravagance—this meant for such a mind as Gisella's an ever-seething though unspoken revolt. And this evening, as she realized the renewed defeat of those hopes and plans which filled de Lys's life, her thoughts reverted in a rage of resentment to the woman whose careless existence seemed no more than a predestined blight on all her husband's aims.

Then, as her eye slipped back through the darkness of the room to the tall, bowed figure beneath the circle of yellow light, Gisella's heart quivered in a sudden passionate heat of pity. And the marquis, turning suddenly in his chair caught her dark eyes fixed upon him, flaming like two eager lamps in the darkness. He started violently and passed his hand slowly over his forehead.

"Is that you, mademoiselle? Pardon me for not seeing you, please. Have you been here long?"

"No, not long."

She held out her hand mechanically and laid the papers upon the table. The marquis turned them over with a careful touch.

"Mademoiselle, this is not fair! Here are all these schemes and accounts worked out to the last detail—all your tomorrow's work! So now, what do you propose to do tomorrow?"

She smiled at him with a faint twitching of her crimson lips. "Tomorrow? I will find plenty to do tomorrow, I promise you, monsieur!"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I agree with you! But don't you see, here is precisely the fault that I am finding with you? Do you never wish to rest, do you never feel the need of a little pleasure in your life?"

At the friendly concern in his voice, Gisella's heart stirred in a sudden painful joy; but her tone was firm and her brown eyes smiling as she replied:

"You seem to forget, monsieur, what has been my bringing up! This work must be my life and my pleasure, for certainly I am acquainted with no other."

He turned upon her a glance half-whimsical, half-believing. "Yes, mademoiselle, you are a model to us all! But still, I doubt whether I should allow myself to profit by—" he paused with a sudden gravity. "Come here, mademoiselle," he said in a changed voice. "I have something to say to you."

With slow steps Gisella advanced into the circle of the lamplight, which threw her fresh cheeks and shining eyes into rich relief against the somber mourning of her dress. What the marquis could have to say to her she did not know, but the kind tones of his voice and the friendly interest in his eyes filled her with a strangely poignant emotion. "Yes, monsieur?" She hesitated as she sat in the chair he placed for her; and in the moment of silence that followed she felt—with a thrill that was not wholly esthetic—how complete was his splendor of outward form, and how winning the expression of the clear gray eyes he turned upon her.

"Mademoiselle Gisella," he said suddenly, "how old are you?"

She started, then answered quietly, "Twenty-four years, monsieur."

"Ah!" he took a long breath. "Not very old, mademoiselle—but nevertheless, an age when the guardians of a young girl must think of her future. And so, mademoiselle, as your grandfather honored me by leaving you, in a certain manner, in my charge"—he stopped short with a sudden laugh—"I am conscious, I admit, that my years and my position make me a rather bizarre guardian for a charming young girl of four-and-twenty! But I declare to you, mademoiselle"—his tone dropped to a sudden seriousness—"that for good faith and for serious good will, your grandfather could have chosen no guardian in all France more suitable than I! And so—you are, I believe, without friends or relatives in America, mademoiselle?"

She nodded, and the young man went on hurriedly, with an enigmatical vagueness in the shining depths of his eyes:

"So I understood; and thereupon the

responsibility for your future life lies, if you will honor me with your confidence, upon me—to whom your grandfather, in dying, gave you in charge as a sacred trust. Listen, mademoiselle; I will be brief and to the point.” He leaned forward earnestly, so that the rosy light of the lamp shone upon his bronzed skin and light brown hair; Gisella, leaning her dimpled chin upon the slim whiteness of her hand, listened in absorbed and painful attention.

“Mademoiselle Gisella,” resumed the marquis gravely, “your customs in America are, as I know, very different from those of our ancient Latin race; nevertheless, as I am ignorant of the course which one of your countrymen would pursue under parallel circumstances, I am obliged to do what seems to me, as a Frenchman, most suitable and most honorable.” Gisella, looking up sharply, awaited his next words in a tense passion of impatience. “Mademoiselle,” he resumed gravely, “it would give me the highest pleasure to see you happily established in life. I therefore ask your permission to send you for the Summer to the house of my aunt, the Comtesse Rainault—an energetic and witty old lady, who is famed as having arranged more marriages than any other one person in France. The necessary dowry I shall be only too happy, with your permission, to supply; and with your personal advantages, we cannot doubt that the end of the year would see you settled in eligible and honorable marriage.”

He spoke hurriedly, mechanically, like one who has an awkward duty to perform, and who wishes to get it off his hands. Gisella’s large eyes, bent upon him, narrowed into two glittering points of light.

“Monsieur,” she said, “you are offering to find a husband for me, and to supply the money necessary to induce him to marry me?”

“Mademoiselle!” the marquis raised a deprecatory hand, “our French fashions differ, I know, from the methods which you other Anglo-Saxons use in such a case. There is no question of paying anyone to marry you; but as the

dowry is, in our poor France, a necessary part of a successful marriage, I should not wish, in your case, to omit it. May I write to my aunt, Madame Rainault?”

Gisella rose to her feet and walked to the shadowy darkness of the embrasured window. The palms of her hands were wet, and in her heart was a strange new pain which she could not persuade herself either to name or to own. Yet in spite of this sudden inexplicable rebellion of her whole being, her intellectual part still retained enough of its powers to realize that by his disinterested offer, the marquis was proving himself her true and kindly friend.

“Thank you, monsieur,” she answered, with quiet firmness, “you are all that is good, and I thank you from my heart for your kind offer to me. But, you see, I do not wish to be married—never, never!”

The marquis’s face, turned from her, was in shadow; then as he bent his serious gaze upon her, it seemed to her for the flash of a moment that something new, something incomprehensible, lay beneath the calm surface of his deep-set eyes.

“You surprise me, mademoiselle,” he observed with a little laugh, “though I believe that some hesitation on such a subject is only natural among young girls; still, I had not expected to find you, with your youth and beauty, so determinedly outspoken in favor of the celibate life.”

In sudden courage and determination, Gisella leaned toward him from the protecting shadows of her embrasure. The rays of lamplight, falling across her face, lit up her curving carmine cheeks and the flashing luster of her eyes; but in total unconsciousness of all her womanly seductiveness, she addressed the man before her with the impassioned frankness of a child.

“Listen, monsieur,” she said. “I am no coquettish young girl, pretending a modest hesitation over natural necessities, and playing like a kitten with the most serious issues of life. I understand, of course, the eligibility of the plan which you propose, and I

realize thoroughly the point of view which your nation holds in such matters. It is not that, believe me, that makes me hesitate!" The marquis, turning his puzzled eyes upon her, sat silently waiting for her next words. "No, monsieur," she added with simplicity, "it is merely that this present work, bequeathed me by my dead grandfather and carried on with you, suits me better than the most magnificent marriage in France. I don't want to leave Héraucourt. I don't want to leave this work with you. Please, please, don't make me go away!"

The marquis met her flushed and excited gaze with a grave smile. "There is no doubt about our need of you! Here in the library, I own it, nobody could take your place. And down there in the village, among my poor workmen, these childish peasants of Héraucourt—nobody, mademoiselle, can manage them like you. *That* was proved last Spring. And now that this sacred monkey of a Gaston Bolde-nave has come back, they say, with his old tricks, we shall need your help, probably, more than ever. Yes, mademoiselle, if it were not the part of an egotist, I could urge you to stay with us at Héraucourt. For, after all," he added, as though to himself, in a little sighing breath that contrasted oddly with the calm command of his usual manner, "after all, marriage is not so infallible a recipe for happiness that we should urge it upon all the world!"

This unconscious confession of his own unhappiness struck with a strange mingling of pain and pleasure upon Gisella's heart; and, in a sudden gust of compassion for the barren dreariness of his own intimate life, she leaned toward him with hands outstretched and all her lonely, yearning young soul in her dark-fringed eyes. "Then it is settled, monsieur, that I stay here with you?"

He glanced up at her with a fleeting smile. "Thank you, mademoiselle. It is something, you see, for a man to have a friend like you to help him in his work."

With a sudden, indefinable gesture he turned back again to the work on the table before him, and Gisella stood by the window, her gaze still riveted upon the tall, soldierly silhouette of his averted figure.

The door from the hall was pushed open a trifle, very softly, and the bright eyes of the marquise peered into the room. There was no sign of recognition from either of the two persons within, and she opened the door a little further. Her restless glance traveled from the familiar spectacle of her husband's absorbed and inattentive back to the motionless figure standing rigid by the black gap of the high-vaulted window, with the yellow lamplight falling upon it from the table near by. She wrinkled her brows and strained her eyes through the shadows. Surely that face was not one that she had ever seen before!

Then suddenly, as the answer to the problem unveiled itself to her active and fertile mind, all thoughts of her recent illness vanished from her brain and she hung cautiously to the bronze latch in a tempest of noiseless chuckles. What cause could there be, indeed, but one, for this sudden change in the cold and virginal eyes which her husband's young secretary had always shown to her? What explanation could there be, but one, to account for this new face that now confronted her with ecstatic, unseeing gaze?—a face open like a flower, flushed in a tender triumph, with eyes lit and kindled beyond recognition by the shining-out of fierce inward joy.

In the gleeful shock which comes of some unforeseen and agreeable discovery, Violette clutched the great bar of bronze. The latch clicked, and the scene before her dissolved into the commonplace of everyday surprise.

"Is that you, Violette? Come in, please; Mademoiselle Varney and I are quite finished," observed the marquis coming to meet her with punctilious courtesy; while Gisella, concealed again behind the immovable mask of her usual face, advanced to pick up her books and papers from the table. She

was conscious of a faint, thin chill in the air, an atmosphere of delicate mockery and subtle disenchantment.

"You are going now, mademoiselle? Indeed, you must be tired! You will let me ring for Jean-Paul to drive you home?"

The words, slight as they were, bore an airy and knowing inflection that made Gisella recoil from the offered kindness. "Thank you, madame, I enjoy the walk, and I am not afraid. Thank you again, and good night!"

With head held high she walked slowly through the splendor of the hallway to the open door and set her face through the darkness toward the solitary little house in the village by the Loire, where nothing but empty rooms waited for her coming.

IV

DURING July Gisella's days went by in a breathless and busy routine, with long hours overtime at the *verrière* made necessary by the over-due orders of the past Spring. Besides this regular work in the office of the glass works she shared with the marquis an alert and friendly vigilance among his people in the village, where Boldenave's continued presence was an unceasing menace of trouble. So far as outward appearances went, he seemed unable to renew his former success among the peasantry. Yet the presence of this antagonistic force in the town added a feeling of uneasiness, and the very air seemed to Gisella charged with an element of feverish distrust.

Her personal labors with her employer, however, continued calm and undisturbed. If de Lys had given any further thought to the scheme for settling the young girl's future, which he had urged upon her in that evening interview, at least he gave no outward sign. Indeed, it seemed to her that there was a reaction of coldness in his manner, a faint shade of distance which marked increasingly the slight and formal nature of the relations between them. From signs felt, rather than

perceived, she imagined that he no longer desired her presence in his library every evening. So she took up the new habit of carrying off the accounts and correspondence with her, as soon as dinner was finished, to work until midnight under her own solitary lamp.

These after-dinner hours the marquis seemed to pass with his wife in a renewed outburst of conscientious devotion which at times almost deceived the clairvoyant eye of Gisella herself. As for Violette, she received the affectionate attentions of her husband with the same airy and unbelieving smile with which she had listened to his reproaches. As for the milliner's bills and racing accounts at Paris, they were paid, and the plans for the new cottages were laid away upon the shelf. Once Gisella, coming into the great tapestried library, found the marquis bent in a profound and melancholy absorption over the file of useless documents. He folded and locked them away without a word; and Gisella, with a sympathetic pang of understanding sharpened by this new exclusion of her from his confidence, glanced fiercely through the window at the little creature promenading among the peacocks in the rose-garden without, in all the useless magnificence of lace and trailing embroidery.

For, in spite of her threats, Violette had not departed for the postponed visit to Trouville, and in spite of her promises to reform, she appeared almost daily in new habits and dresses of exquisite cut and costly fashion. To Gisella's surprise, the marquis seemed to make no remonstrance against this continued extravagance. In unbroken silence he paid the mounting bills and cut down wherever practicable in his schemes for developing the prosperity of his people. As for Violette herself, she accepted the situation with philosophic calmness. Half the day she spent with Nanette, polishing and curling her delicate beauty to the utmost point of radiance, and arraying herself in the new toilettes from Paris; the other half she passed in long rides on her favorite mare, or in solitary ram-

bles along the winding banks of the Loire.

To Gisella's watchful eye, the situation appeared increasingly threatening and fantastic. Where the drains upon the marquis's income would stop, she did not know; but she realized, with all her full knowledge of his affairs, that such a condition could not go on forever. His income, though very large, had suffered serious diminution by the recent strike and by the instalment of new machinery; and what business reverses had begun, his wife's senseless extravagance bade fair to finish completely. Yet, so far as Gisella knew, he said not a word of remonstrance. What had caused this gradual change in de Lys's attitude toward his wife, it was beyond Gisella's power to fathom; and the threatened danger to his solvency, like his growing exclusion of herself from his friendly confidence, was an unanswered problem which she was forced to face in silence.

One evening in early August, the atmosphere at the dinner table was more than usually strained and foreboding. The marquise had that afternoon descended upon her husband with pawn tickets from the Mont-de-Piété, representing loans to the amount of a hundred thousand francs, securities for some valuable family jewels which he himself had presented to her, and which she had turned into ready cash on this occasion of her last visit to Paris. Now there was interest to be paid, and redemption to be considered. Gisella, who in this new leniency of the marquis's was no longer chosen as his wife's ambassador in her difficulties, had glanced with amazement from beneath her long lashes at the face of her employer, as he laid these new obligations before her for accounting. There was no change in his face, except perhaps for a new shade of pallor, and a certain darkness beneath the eyes. Otherwise the expression of eyes and lips remained the same—that of a soul disillusioned but unembittered, looking out upon his fellow-creatures with a tolerant scorn, tempered with tenderness. If he felt any pain at this new proof of his wife's

wanton disregard of his plans, at least he betrayed none; and it was not Gisella's province—now less than ever—to ask him point blank why he did not take some decided measures to put an end to an intolerable condition of affairs.

When dinner was over, Gisella rose, and, according to the recently adopted custom, prepared for immediate departure to her own little house in the village. Across the gold candelabra, Violette nodded a smiling good night to her guest, as she followed her husband into the small Louis XVI. salon which adjoined the dining-hall. As for the marquis, he vouchsafed no farewell greeting of any kind whatever. At this omission, so unlike his usual courtesy, Gisella shrank back in a sudden painful sense of her own insignificance. After all, who was she, that a gentleman of Monsieur de Lys's importance should trouble himself for her?

As she came down the great winding staircase, she passed by the door of the little salon, where for a moment there struck upon her eyes the piercingly vivid glimpse of a charming interior. The tiny room itself, furnished in imitation of the Trianon, seemed a bower of pink brocaded roses, pale blue knots and delicate gilding. Violette, in a pink dress that matched the roses, sat at the piano singing a snatch of song from the Opéra Comique. The marquis, his back turned to the door, a lighted cigarette in his hand, helped himself to a tiny glass of Chartreuse from the gold tray held by the footman before him. The whole picture, lit with shaded lamps and perfumed with August roses, seemed an ideal presentment of domestic peace and intimate happiness. In spite of her knowledge of the hollow foundations on which it rested, Gisella's heart contracted in a quick, wrenching pang of loneliness. She was going home to open a door behind which there waited no face to look up and smile at her coming.

She went slowly down the wide, white road that led to the great gate of the walled park, walking very stiff and erect in a determined effort to throw

off the sudden weakness that had overcome her. The twilight, rosy with the luminous haze of a midsummer sunset, was touched with damp freshness which is never long absent from the evenings of central France. In the gentle breeze which blew softly down the river, the avenue of poplar trees shivered with a faint rustle of their pale leaves, and the poppies in the border swayed their nodding heads. From somewhere beneath her on the hillside came the evening cry of the peacocks—soft, raucous, mournful.

Gisella's quick feet lagged, hesitated, finally stood still, upon a little eminence where a turn of the winding driveway gave a glimpse of the dark château below her, and the far-off rim of long gray plains beyond.

All about her was the piercing, evanescent loveliness of the Summer evening, and within her heart was a new and yearning anguish from which she turned her face as a child buries its head in his pillow from the creaking darkness of the night.

Trained as she was in self-analysis, she had—in spite of her grandfather's contempt for such matters—long understood the danger which lies for a woman in the mistaking of a particular sentiment for a general, in the merging of enthusiasm for a cause into a personal devotion for its exponent. It was now many months since she had begun to suspect that her unwearying pleasure in her work was not drawn altogether from the service of abstract principle, as much as from the approving smile and "Well done, mademoiselle!" of her fellow-worker and guide. But that the sympathy thus inspired could ever grow to a dominant yearning, an overmastering and instinctive passion which should swallow up every other thought of her mind and wish of her heart—there was nothing in her experience, whether personal or borrowed—to warn her that such a thing could ever happen to her. The pain which she was suffering seemed causeless and wilful, like the convulsions of an aspen uprooted by the wind. And she felt herself very little and very

lonely, in the empty, fragrant world that rustled about her.

Suddenly in the château below her a window opened—one of the long mulioned windows giving upon the broad stone terrace. For a moment there was a glimpse of a fluffy head peering out; then a gauzy little figure stepped cautiously upon the terrace, and flew quickly down the steps into the embowering green of the shrubbery. The whole aspect and suggestion of the act was that of mystery; and Gisella's heart was touched with a curious small shock, for the white form had not passed so quickly that she had not had time to recognize it as that of the marquise. In a moment, however, all thought of everything so worthless and so ephemeral was driven from her mind by the sound of a slow, firm step upon the graveled walk beside her—a path that wound away through the garden into a wilderness of roses and of yew.

Gisella's mind, usually bound down so firmly to practical sense, was for that very reason more the prey of impulse once admitted. The unseen person behind the shrubbery below her she knew to be the marquis, and she knew the direction in which the twisting path must take him. What harm could it do, to her or to anyone else, if she flew across the lawn to the closely trimmed bower of green yew-trees beyond, and watched him as he passed by? She would not speak to him, she would not break in upon his solitude. But just to see him, only to see his face once more before she went home to that empty house!

With a lip twisted in scorn of the childish impulse which she found herself unable to disobey, she crept swiftly up the hillside between the trees. For a moment there came to her the grotesque realization of these three human beings flitting through the wide space of the garden, each one, so far as she knew, ignorant of the other's whereabouts. Then her heart fluttered painfully, as she drew aside the green branches with a cautious hand; for up the pathway below her came the crunch

of a step upon the gravel, and the faint aroma of a cigar.

In the quick instant of the step's approach, Gisella stood clearly face to face with her own sensations. What she felt was love—yes, she could not longer refuse acknowledgment to that overwhelming fact. She, the strong and the superior, endowed with a sacred mission to carry forward in life, and fortified from childhood with a full knowledge of the nature of this unworthy human weakness—she had fallen in love with her employer, like any little typewriter girl with a pink blouse and a curly head!—a man, moreover, who not only had no use for her love, but was bound in faith and honor to another woman. She, Gisella Varney, she was in love with a man to whom nothing but her own dishonor could ever make her anything but a distant friend! She tingled with shame as in a sudden flash of memory she remembered her grandfather's standards of honor, as well as the convulsive scorn that wrenched his face if by chance he was forced to speak of the existence of love. Then her mind ran swiftly back to her childhood, and to the pale, pretty little mother who had always refused to speak of the most headstrong passions by any stronger word than "like," because, as she had said, "love" was such an indelicate word. And here was her daughter, hidden in the shrubbery like a thief, to steal one hungry glimpse of a man to whom she could never be more than a shadow that moves and passes.

The slow steps rounded the twisting garden path, and all thought was swept from Gisella's mind in a quick shock that seemed to drive all the force from her body, from her heart to her straining eyes. Olivier de Lys walked slowly, like a man bowed in thought. As he approached Gisella's hiding-place, it seemed to her that she could almost feel the warmth of his presence. Had she put out her hand she could have touched him, while her eyes eagerly caught his face in the last rays of the dying light.

But from the face that she saw be-

fore her, she shrank back in a kind of terrified shame, as of a person who had violated the sacred inner privacy of another's soul. For the face which passed in that instant before her eyes was not that with which de Lys confronted her and the world every day—patient and strong—but a face haggard, weary, terrible; the eyes and lips those of a man who struggles with some inward force which has almost overmastered him, of a soul at death grips with some secret foe.

The first impulse of Gisella's mind was horror of the mean part which she had played in spying upon his solitude. With eyelids clenched fast like a fist against the sight of the naked soul which passed slowly before her, she cowered rigidly among the yew branches, listening for the footsteps to die away. In spite of herself, her mind flew back in a piercing flash over the events of the past month. Then, after all, it was not healed, but a hundred times intensified, the trouble in his heart which she had instinctively divined? Then it was not after all with the equanimity that she had imagined, that he faced his wife's extravagant and selfish caprices? It was not indifference that had led to his strange conduct of the past month—but rather some secret inner wound in whose pain the gallings of everyday life were swallowed up and lost. What the nature of that wound could be, she sternly forbade herself to speculate; then a renewed recollection of the desolation in his face swept aside all gropings of thought as to its cause. He was suffering, and all alone. He could never know that in another soul his trouble was mirrored, in all the anguish of tender sympathy. That she was powerless to comfort him, powerless to help him bear the load of sorrow that was crushing him—there, it seemed to her, was the sharpest sting of her unwarranted love.

Hardly conscious of the flight of time she crouched with fast-closed eyes among the yew-trees. The footsteps had died away; there was no sound but the rustling of leaves and the far-off

murmur of the river, rushing over the sandy shoals. Suddenly Gisella caught her breath in a sudden start, for almost beside her, as it seemed, the stillness was broken by a little whispering laugh.

"Is he gone?" said a voice softly. Gisella opened her eyes; in the twilight she beheld the green wall on the other side of the garden path quiver and stir. "Yes, he's gone!" said the voice again, and, breathless and laughing, Violette scrambled out from among the branches.

Her yellow head was disheveled, her bright eyes shining in a wilful intoxication of delight. For a moment she stood glancing up and down, one white hand clutching the trailing draperies of her filmy pink chiffon, the other detained, as it seemed, by some invisible force behind the screen of leaves. In terror of the position of unwilling spy in which thus for the second time she found herself, Gisella held her breath. It was too late to think of flight, and to disclose herself would be to invite catastrophe. Again she closed her eyes, but to shut out the revelation of the voices was impossible.

"Let me go!" came the marquise's voice again, in a tone of pouting protest. "Let go my hand, you wretch! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" There was the sound of a romping struggle, and the murmur of a masculine voice unfamiliar to Gisella's ears. In half-comprehending horror of the situation thus suddenly disclosed she tried to shut out from her mind the one inevitable meaning which the scene could hold. Again she heard Violette's clear and laughing tones.

"Very well, just one, if you will promise to let go of my hand—what, isn't my hand enough for you? . . . Please let me go. Don't you know that he's prowling all around the park at this very moment? There, naughty boy, just one. If you insist, I'm sure it's not my fault."

There was a faint sound, half heard but unmistakable. Gisella's head swam in dizzy sickness; it seemed to her that she heard the hiss of the snake

in the garden, that she was made an unwilling witness to the disclosure of the beast in man which, like the head of the Gorgon, is death to him that sees it. Violette's voice cut the silence again, charming and thrilling, like the glint of a canary's wings flashing across the bottomless pit.

"And now, you truly must let me go, because you see this evening it really isn't safe . . . Very well, tomorrow, the same place, the usual time. *Au revoir, mignon!*"

There was a whirl of fluttering skirts, a vanishing patter of airy footsteps. Gisella stretched her stiffened limbs and opened her eyes; and before her, stepping calmly from the opposing wall of green out upon the path before her, she beheld the form of a young man.

In appearance he was small and delicately made, with a certain surface elegance which made it difficult for the observer to be sure in just what station of life he should be rated. His face, singularly handsome in tint and molding, was left incomplete, as it were, by a lack of fine outline or delicate finish. In the sparkle of his eyes, in the full curve of his lips, there was a fiery charm, a winning weakness, that showed him a man who through life would have more power over his fellow creatures than over himself, and who would probably use that power with a lack of judgment that could end only in disaster. All this passed like a flash through the mind of Gisella as he stood unconscious before her, lighting his cigarette between his hands raised and curved against the wind.

At the sight of this familiar face, Gisella's rage and disgust broke out in a sudden irrepressible cry. "Gaston Boldenave!" she exclaimed huskily, as she swept aside the environing branches and stepped out upon the graveled path beside him.

For a moment he started and shrank away; then, recovering himself he confronted her with a boyish smile that was the perfection of undaunted impudence. "Mademoiselle Varney!" he replied, sweeping his hat from his head

with a florid gesture of courtesy, "this is an unexpected pleasure!"

Gisella surveyed him with loathing. "What are you doing here?" she asked slowly.

He smiled again. "As I suppose you have been hidden behind those trees for some moments past, you probably know the answer to that question as well as I do!"

"Listen to me!" replied Gisella hurriedly. "My presence here was with no intention of spying. But since I have come by accident upon evidence of your treachery to monsieur the marquis, do you suppose that I intend to let it go on?"

Boldenave flicked the ash from his cigarette, and puffed it again with cool enjoyment. "My dear Mademoiselle Varney," he remarked, "I really don't see what you are going to do about it! If the marquis's wife finds me more attractive than she finds him, there's nothing he can do about it—any more than he could do anything about it when his men chose to listen to me, last Spring, instead of to him!"

"Ah—" breathed Gisella softly. She began to comprehend his motives—the long-harbored grudge, the malicious desire of revenge to which Violette's weak vanity and longing for constant excitement had fallen only too easy a prey. How far had the affair gone? Was there still time to save the little marquise from irremediable ruin, and de Lys's honor from an indelible stain? Boldenave continued, smiling:

"Of course, you know the marquis better than I do; but from what I have the honor to know of him, I should say that it would be a bold spirit who would go to him with such news as this—and rather an unkind brute, too, when, if we all just hold our tongues, he can sleep in peace. Come, now, mademoiselle, do you think you'll tell?"

At the wheedling impertinence of his voice, Gisella flushed hotly. But in spite of her indignation, she was conscious of a thin stream of sudden doubt trickling coldly across her resolution. He had spoken the truth; what was there, after all, that she could do to put

an end to this shameful state of affairs? To Violette herself, she might speak openly—but to de Lys? Was it her duty, after all, to rend the bonds of husband and wife by the revelation of this shameful secret upon which she had stumbled by unfair and unintentional means? Unless, indeed, the marquis was already aware of the condition of affairs, here would be the explanation of that inward suffering which she had seen tonight so deeply bitten into his face. But from such an explanation her belief and her pride in him alike revolted; she would never believe that Olivier de Lys was the man to sit down in silent passivity under the threat of such disgrace as this! Meanwhile Boldenave was speaking in his soft, full-throated voice:

"Mademoiselle, you are free to do exactly as you please, so far as I am concerned. I have no objections to your telling the marquis—in fact, the idea of his aristocratic rage is rather charming to me! But to Violette—and to the noble gentleman himself . . . Good night, mademoiselle. I leave you to make up your mind."

With a jaunty bow he strolled off into the gathering darkness, one hand on his hip, the other touching his cigarette. Gisella stood for an instant looking after him; then, clutching her skirts around her, she flung herself back in the shrubbery, and ran as fast as her feet would carry her toward the road. The little house by the Loire, bare and lonely though it was, seemed to her now a haven of shelter and peace.

V

THE house where Gisella Varney lived alone was a low, dark-gabled cottage terraced high above the road, like a tiny box set about with clustering laburnum and honeysuckle. Except the dingy flat in Boston and the dingier apartment on the left bank of the Seine, this was the only home she had ever known; and every corner of house and garden was filled for her

with recollections of the old man whose memory she cherished with so passionate a reverence. But as she slowly ascended the stone steps that led up from the road, it seemed to her that she had never known until tonight how completely alone she had been left by the death of this tender friend of her childhood. And as she thrust her key into the front door, she turned her face painfully away from the far end of the veranda and the high deal settle where in his last days of decrepitude her grandfather had always sat and waited for her coming.

She turned the grating key in the lock; in spite of herself, there weighed upon her the sense of some near presence, which drew her eyes back again through the darkness, to something shadowy and indistinct in that familiar corner. She strained her eyes. "Who is there?" she whispered abruptly.

She was answered by an apologetic laugh, and the approach of a tall form which rose and came slowly toward her.

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle!" said the voice of Olivier de Lys. "I didn't mean to startle you, really! But, you see, I was taking a walk in the village, and I thought I would just come in and make a little call. You have been as long as the little lady with the red cap, making your way home, mademoiselle!"

His voice, deep-toned and vibrant, was that of a man thoroughly at his ease and master of himself; and in his face, when she had entered the cottage and lit the hanging lamp, Gisella could see no sign of the emotion which, but an hour before, had transformed his face into an image of sentient pain. Had that fleeting and vivid impression been, perhaps, the work of her own too active imagination? For the moment she almost forced herself to believe so—and the scene later in the garden, the mere dissolving figment of a dream! With a fierce resolution to snatch from the vanishing moment its full measure of joy, she struck violently from her recollection all the ugly and terrible things which during the past hour had crowded upon her. The marquis, seat-

ing himself, smiled at her; and in that smile she felt all their former confidence renewed and doubly restored. His friendly regard warmed her like sunshine. It seemed to her that the whole room was full of kind hands stretched out to her, and in sudden terror lest he read the bliss upon her face, she shaded her eyes with her hand and turned her face away.

The marquis picked up a small brass paper-cutter from the table, and played with it abstractedly as he talked. "I hope," he said slowly, "that you will pardon me for coming in so late. But don't be alarmed. I shall not stay more than a moment! And, like the apostle, I can say in all reverence, it is good for me to be here."

His voice slid off in a weary droop that recalled sharply to Gisella's mind the secret trouble which she knew lay beneath that calm exterior. Did he know, after all? Impossible to believe that with such knowledge he could sit there so calmly inactive! And yet, what else could touch so nearly his self-contained and gentle strength? De Lys, looking up from the table, met Gisella's eyes like two luminous shadows fixed upon him. For a moment they regarded each other in silence; then the marquis spoke dreamily:

"When I come in here, mademoiselle, where at every turn I feel the presence of my old teacher, it seems to me that I am again a young chap just beginning life, full of faith and enthusiasm, and especially when you look at me that way as you did just now. Did anyone ever tell you, Mademoiselle Gisella, that you have your grandfather's eyes?"

In the tenderness of the recollections thus evoked, Gisella smiled at him. "Poor grandpapa!" she said. "It was his dearest wish that I should resemble him in everything, so that when he was dead he might feel that something of himself had been left behind on earth, to carry on his work. If you think I have his eyes, I am glad. But the rest of me? I try—oh, so hard—to be all that he was. And I

fail so often; and then I remember—there's more than my grandfather in me. There's all those other people who have lived on earth and died, to make up Gisella Varney."

The marquis said nothing, but drew upon the table with the paper-knife. Suddenly he looked up with a smile, and she smiled back at him. "Did I ever show you my family?" she said.

He shook his head. For answer she rose, unlocked her desk and took from it a packet of photographs and a small leather-covered case, with which she returned to the table. The lamp flared in a sudden gust, and from the night beyond the open door there was a hint of thunder in the air. For the flash of a moment it seemed to Gisella that the happy security of this hour was a mere instant's shelter in the eddy of a storm, a single foothold of solid ground in a wide quagmire of sin and desolation. It seemed to her that in Olivier's eyes, meeting hers for the passing of a glance, there was reflected the same tremulous conviction—but in his soul more gravely weighed, more resolutely faced.

She undid the photographs before him. "You'll forgive me, won't you," she said, "for boring you with these? But, you see, to have someone look at them with me—it seems to bring them back to me, for just a moment! Look, you know who this is?"

The picture she showed him was that of a man in middle life, with eyes whose brightness seemed to survive even in that faded photograph, and with a certain suggestion of herself in the close lips and firm contour of the jaw. A second glance might, however, suggest to the observer that the resemblance was on the girl's part rather acquired than inborn—the result of determined imitation and laborious modeling of her own softer nature upon that stern, pictured individuality. The marquis, surveying the photograph, spoke with a sudden energy that startled Gisella.

"Your grandfather," he said, "was the best man I ever knew. I would rather cut off my hand, I think, than be

guilty of a single act which should make me unworthy to remember him!"

In a glow of sympathetic enthusiasm, Gisella raised her eyes to his. To her surprise he turned away, toying again with the paper-knife in his hand. From beyond the door there was a pale flare of Summer lightning. De Lys threw a troubled glance toward the night without, and took up another from the pile of photographs. To Gisella the air seemed electric, charged with a thousand possibilities both within and without; and she clenched her hands in a sudden flurried effort at self-command as de Lys asked her:

"Who is this, please?"

"That is mamma." Gisella answered steadily, though she felt the blood flutter in her cheeks as she leaned toward him. "I have no picture of my father," she went on quickly, seeking for words to fill the silence. "Poor papa! I am afraid, you see, that no one ever wanted one very much. He died just a little while after I was born, and I don't think anyone was sorry. That seems a pity, doesn't it? For whatever he was, I suppose he couldn't work out anything but what was in him. So, even in my thoughts, I never dare to blame him. For how do I know what is in myself, and what I may do, some day?"

The marquis shot a quick look at her as she stood leaning against the table, her long brown eyes, with their suggestions of some remote strain of Eastern blood, fixed upon the quivering darkness beyond the open door. He opened his lips to speak, then with a sudden change of purpose returned to the study of the photograph in his hand.

"I like your mother's face," he said, after a pause. "There is a sweetness in it that is very winning. And more than that, there is strength—not so much the force of active purpose, perhaps, as the rarer strength of self-command."

Gisella turned, startled from her reserve by a quick shock of pleasure. "Ah, monsieur, how well you have read her character! It is true, she never

had much sympathy with grandpa's schemes and ambitions—poor little mamma! She was brought up with a maid to brush her hair and bring her her cup of chocolate every morning—and when I remember her, she used to do all the cooking for grandpapa and me, and wash the dishes and sweep the apartment; that is, until I grew big enough to help her, of course. But never once did I hear her utter a word of complaint or say that things might have been different! And she used to try to train me to be the same—to eat plain bread-and-butter when there was jam on the table, or to wear a green hair-ribbon to school with my blue dress, and leave the blue one in the box. It was the only way to learn how to live, she said. 'Remember, little Gisella,' she always used to say, 'it is not what we want, it is what we are, that is of importance in this world!' And so I try, every minute of every day, to be what she was, and what she wanted me to be. But it is discouraging, sometimes! For it is curious how much one wants in this world and how badly one wants it!"

De Lys flung the paper-knife upon the table. "It is, indeed!" he answered abruptly, "but if that were not so, then where would be the merit of going without?" There was a moment's pause, while a clap of wind rustled drily through the trees in the garden without. The marquis turned again to Gisella. "Is that all your family?" he asked with a sudden smile.

She picked up the leather-bound case. "One more," she said. "You know, I suppose, that my grandfather married a little peasant girl, the daughter of an immigrant from Sicily. She was my grandmother. I am afraid he was not much happier in his marriage than mamma was, poor grandpapa! Perhaps it is not meant that our family shall be happy that way. But then, as mamma would say, what does that matter, so long as we try to be good?" She laughed constrainedly as she wrenched the clasp open from the case. "Look, it is a miniature, painted by La Tremblaye when he came over to

New York, fifty years ago. She is pretty, isn't she?"

The young man pushed aside the pictures on the table before him—straight-lipped New England faces, calm-eyed and conventional, shadowed in the faded tones of ancient photography. But what a face the Sicilian woman had as she looked up at him suddenly from his hand!—a face made up of impulse and of mantling blood, vivid as a flame, richly colored as an August flower. The lips, heavy and warm, hung open in a little smile of self-satisfaction; in the dark eyes, as in those of the descendant, there was a languor which suggested a far-away trace of Oriental blood. The marquis looked up, half-startled. "This is a surprising picture," he said, as though to himself; "a most amazing picture!"

Gisella smiled faintly. "Yes," she said, "grandpapa had taste when he was young, hadn't he? And yet, you see, she didn't make him a very good wife! When my father was just a little baby, she ran off and left him and grandpapa all alone, because she had seen someone else that she liked better. Then when she found that the new one was not just what she wanted, she put a stiletto into him. And when she found that life after that was not very amusing, she took the same knife and stabbed it into her own heart. Always, you see, she took what she wanted from life, whether it belonged to her or not—just as poor little mamma made it a point to give up everything she wanted even when there was no harm in it. I wonder which of the two was the more unhappy?"

De Lys looked from the miniature in his hand to the photographs on the table—from the photographs to the living face of the woman before him. "It is true," he said slowly, "what you say. There are many people who have lived and died, to make up Gisella Varney!"

She met his eyes in solemn forgetfulness. "Do you know," she said, "what one of the great souls of this world said about that—the writer that my poor grandfather loved more than

anyone else? Listen: *'Who shall say how far each one of us who passes across this earth leaves behind him a part of himself, which shall not develop until after his death?'*" She breathed slowly and softly as she took the miniature from his hand.

"That is what I believe," she went on, "or rather I see plainly that nothing else is possible. We are put here on earth to work out what is in us—and when the moment of choice arrives, who shall say which inheritance of pain and impulse shall conquer? Here I am, Gisella Varney, the type of everything that is most commonplace in my own Anglo-Saxon race. But not only have I the name of this little stray savage from Sicily; I have a part of her life living in me—the blood and soul of the Saracens, perhaps, or of Barbarossa!" She paused for a moment. "Don't be afraid!" she added with a little laugh. "I am not going to bowstring you, or do anything alarming! But, just the same," her voice trailed off again in meditation, "they live in me, all these different people. And which one is really *me*, down at the bottom of my soul, to overmaster all the others if I stood for once face to face with the hidden eternal questions—that I don't know. And probably I never shall know!"

For a moment they sat silent, when presently the stillness of the night without was broken by the patter of sudden rain. With a start the marquis rose to his feet. "Nearly eleven o'clock!" he cried. "Shocking hours, for our little province—and besides, here comes the storm."

Gisella gathered the pictures together, overwhelmed by a sudden hot self-consciousness. How stupid, how egotistical she had been, how she had wasted this hour of precious companionship! "I am afraid," she murmured, "that I have bored you dreadfully, with all this talk about myself and my own affairs."

"I am honored at your confidence, mademoiselle, believe me!" The marquis's tone was friendly and sincere, though charged with a gentle melan-

choly that weighed more heavily through his next words. "If the hour were not so late, I would perhaps make you listen to a few of my own perplexities, in return." He stood for a moment, his tall figure leaning against the arm-chair from which he had just risen; then, as though hardly conscious of the lustrous youthfulness, the tender, unspoken sympathy of the woman's face raised to his, he went on dreamily:

"Though I begin to think, mademoiselle, in the matter of these same perplexities of mine, that the trouble lies not so much in me, or in the way in which I go to work, as in the very nature of the task that I am attempting. As an idealist, I should be writing books and dreaming dreams. As a business man, I should be trying to make money—and above all, as the member of an ancient outworn noblesse, I should be doing—what? Racing an automobile from Paris to Madrid, possibly, or dazzling Monte Carlo. But in practice, I am a failure, I fear, in all three directions!"

His voice, light and mocking though it was, had an undercurrent of pain that showed Gisella how deeply he was moved. For the first time in her experience, the silent, self-contained man was showing her something of that inner self whose processes she had implicitly divined; and in her knowledge of that same inner self it seemed not so much the abstraction of his thoughts as some mocking incarnation of the marquise that she was combating as she replied:

"Ah, no, monsieur! All you have done for these poor people of yours in Héraucourt, is that nothing? And all you mean to do! Ah, no, monsieur!" Her white teeth glistened in a sudden smile. "You see, my vanity will not allow you to say that your work has been a failure; for have not my grandfather and I had our humble share in it, as well?"

As though in the sudden impulse of some unwelcome thought, the marquis turned sharply toward her; but her smile was answered in his face only by a painful contraction of the brows.

"Mademoiselle!" he said with sudden formality, "that reminds me of the errand on which I came this evening, and which I had nearly forgotten. In spite of our conversation on the subject last month, I have settled with myself that you would better leave Héraucourt."

The rich tints of Gisella's face blanched as under some sudden, withering breath; she started to her feet, her large eyes fixed painfully upon the cold and handsome face before her.

"Leave Héraucourt!" she murmured, trembling. "What have I done, monsieur? In what way have I failed to give satisfaction?"

The marquis smiled politely; his manner was friendly and sincere, but the fine chain of sympathy was snapped. "In every way you have given satisfaction, mademoiselle," he replied with grave cordiality; "but the reasons which I urged upon you in our last interview still remain, to me at least, as powerful as ever. Furthermore, my aunt, Madame Rainault, finds herself desperately in need of a young companion for her Summer in the Pyrenees and you, mademoiselle, you are pale—you are suffering for a change of air and scene. Here is my aunt's letter; it rests with you to send what answer you please!"

He placed in her hand a delicately scented missive, whose hair-line superscription and embossed armorial bearings struck upon Gisella's eye with a kind of impersonal conviction of the moment's reality. But for this tangible evidence, could she have believed the testimony of her ears—that this man, the daily sight of whose face was to her as the very breath of life, placed so little value upon her long services and arduous fidelity that he was willing to part with her at the first convenient opportunity? She had thought, at least, that as a servant and a machine she was of some slight value to him. Then the pain of that thought was driven from her mind by a darker fancy. Was it possible, after all, that he knew of his wife's secret disgrace, and wished to remove from the château

all responsible witnesses of her dishonor and his own?

"Thank you, monsieur," she answered wearily, "this invitation sounds very charming. I will think it over, and give you my answer in the morning. A question like that cannot be answered all at once, can it?"

The marquis nodded hurriedly. "Of course, of course!" he responded, "but it is an opportunity which I should dislike to see you miss. You must not refuse it, mademoiselle! Ah!" And suddenly the curtain of the outer darkness was torn aside by the blue flare of some wild, invisible flame, and the air quivered faintly, in the shock of far-off thunder.

"I must go!" said the marquis quickly. "I left Madame de Lys all alone in the château, with only the servants. And she is afraid of thunder, my poor little Violette!"

His accent of deliberate tenderness baffled Gisella's penetration. Did he really believe that Violette had waited there in the little Louis XVI salon, all alone, since his departure? Yes, surely he knew nothing! And yet, in that case, how explain?

The marquis held out a hasty hand to her; and the voice in which he spoke seemed strangely changed and unfamiliar.

"Good night, little Mademoiselle Gisella," he said; "good night, and sleep well!"

Without a word, she held out her hand to him; and bowing in silence he walked away swiftly, down the stone steps into the gathering storm.

He had not been long gone before the clouds broke in wild rumbling thunder and long-drawn swirls of rain. Gisella, solitary in her bed, lay awake for long hours with face lifted to the cool, wet wind which drew in through her open windows, and with hands that sought every now and then beneath the pillow for the small brass paper-knife with which Olivier de Lys's hands had played.

VI

NEXT morning, Gisella sat down

alone with the morning's mail, in the great vaulted library. Monsieur the marquis had gone out last night on one of the new Arabian horses which he had just imported from Algeria, and had not yet returned. There had for a while been some anxiety at the château; but this morning there had been a telephone message from Blois, to say that he had gone there to look at some new invoice of acids, and would come back in the course of the day.

"But, name of a dog!—a thousand pardons, mademoiselle!" remarked Hector, half to himself and half to Gisella, as he languidly dusted his master's models, "there is more in monsieur the marquis's mind, I answer for it, than a mere mess of acids! For this morning I met my wife's brother-in-law, who rode to Blois last night in search of the doctor, and coming back, just before dawn, who should he meet but monsieur the marquis, galloping along on one of those new Arabians, all alone in the rain and lightning! He passed close, mademoiselle, and this poor brother-in-law of my wife's shouted out his respectful greetings. But monsieur the marquis, he never glanced to the right or the left. I demand of mademoiselle, is this not a mystery?"

Gisella went on quietly with her work, but her mind flew back to the night before—to her vision of his solitary face, to his strange words of their evening interview. It was true, then, he had some heavy and mysterious trouble upon his soul; and was it possible for her longer to doubt what it was? As for herself, her heart might break with pity for his pain, but there was nothing that she could do to help him—nothing but to go away and leave him alone in unwitnessed misery. In spite of herself, her soul stirred in the sharpest of all sufferings—that of shame for the one we love. It was not what she would have expected from him, this silent acquiescence, this unmanly flight!

Then in quick reaction of tenderness, she blamed herself for the suspicion. After all, what did she know of his

reasons, how could she be sure of what was working in his mind? Two things only were certain; he was suffering, and a hideous wrong was being done him. Was there nothing she could do to help him, she who loved him so much, and who must so soon go away and leave him forever?

She shrank from the presence of Violette as from the neighborhood of a deadly explosive instrument. At luncheon time she sent word that she was detained at her desk, and all through the afternoon she started at the approach of every stray footstep that passed the library door.

The hours went by and the marquis did not return; his continued absence, at least, was something! Anything to delay the catastrophe, to avert the ruin which she felt settling thick, like dust, through the ancient shadows of the silent château of Lys-de-Héraucourt.

Suddenly the stillness of the room was broken by the music of a little voice, fresh and thrilling, singing outside the window. The paper dropped from Gisella's hand, her eyes followed the sound helplessly. Then there was the rattle of casements jerked open, and the marquise sprang laughing into the room.

She was dressed in a pale-green muslin, in which she looked to the full as pretty as in her pink robe of the night before. Through the transparent lace of the sleeves her white arms sparkled coolly, and under the rose-wreathed Leghorn of her white garden hat, her soft face appeared the ideal of girlish gaiety and youthful innocence. But all these charms, which formerly had struck upon Gisella's eyes with a sharp sense of contrast, served now only to fortify her soul in a strong, slow scorn. Poor, humble, unloved she might be, but at least she was mistress of herself—no mere this-tledown of caprice and wayward instinct, like the fair-haired and petted creature before her. In the closed courtyard of her soul there might seethe a trembling company of desires and regrets; the gate without was

fast locked and silent. And as she met the bright blue glance that searched for her through the shaded room, she shook in a sudden warm tempest of gratitude for the mercy of concealing lips and eyes, the cloak of flesh behind which the soul might shelter itself in peace.

Violette laughed. "Yes, it's I!" she observed as she perched herself upon the table. "I've just come in for a moment to see how you were getting on in here all by yourself, so solemn and so serious. And upon my word I think you're lucky, for in my opinion you have the nicest room in the château. By the way, how's your headache—better?"

With a startled attempt to collect her thoughts, Gisella took in her breath to reply. But, without waiting for an answer to her question, the little marquise swept forward in the current of her thoughts.

"I suppose you know that Monsieur de Lys isn't home yet," she remarked, examining the points of the pale-green slippers that swung lightly before her. "You see, it is the most peculiar thing. This morning, up comes Jean Paul from the stables, with a crowd of satellites behind him, to tell me, good God of wood! that last night, just after this sacred monster of a storm broke over us, down comes monsieur the marquis to the stables, orders his saddle upon one of these mad savages of Arabians, and gallops off like a thousand blue fiends down the highroad!" The marquise mimicked the harsh patois, with funny little grimaces of her pink mouth. "And he is not come home yet. Amusing, isn't it?" she added suddenly, with a whimsical side glance that filled Gisella with a curious sense that it was she herself, and not the new-comer, who was being put upon her guard.

For a moment the two young women sat silent in the somber, half-lit magnificence of the ancient room, while the unfastened window swung slowly back and forth with intermittent gusts of flower-scented sunlight. Then the marquise slid to her feet with a yawn.

"*Eh bien*, mademoiselle, I am off!" she vouchsafed to say. "I just looked in on you to say good day, and now I'm going out for a little stroll in the forest. *Au revoir*, little mademoiselle grand-mamma!"

The last words, with their mocking and airy insolence, passed unnoticed over Gisella's consciousness beside the vivid horror of the picture evolved by the marquise's declaration of her purpose. Whether it was for Olivier's sake or for the sake of the woman herself, Gisella could not stop to determine; but an impulse, unformulated yet irresistible, swept over her doubts and carefully wrought hesitations, into the irrepressible cry:

"No, madame, don't go today! Don't meet him today!"

From Violette's pink-and-white face the childish beauty shriveled and drew back in a thin grimace that showed her sharp white teeth, until it seemed to Gisella that at last she stood face to face with the other woman's soul, stripped bare to its inward core of treachery.

There was silence for a moment while their eyes wrestled in an encounter that left no room for words. Then the marquise began to laugh unsteadily.

"What do you mean?" she said, with an effort at unconsciousness. Gisella rose from her seat and came toward her.

"Madame, I never meant to intrude upon your privacy, but I couldn't help seeing you together, you and—and Monsieur Boldenave! I know you don't mean any harm, but oh, it's dangerous, what you are doing. Please, please don't speak to him again!"

With all the energy of her nature drawn into the force of her supplication Gisella stood with outstretched hands. Madame de Lys looked at her, moistened her lips with her tongue, and finally replied with the unexpected question:

"Have you told Olivier?"

Gisella stared, hardly believing her ears. Impatiently the other woman repeated her inquiry; and Gisella,

thrusting back her own sensations of amazement and wonder, replied with the involuntary cry:

"Monsieur de Lys, doesn't he know?"

Violette took a long breath of relief. "How should he know," she said, with peevish scorn, "if you haven't told him? And now the question is: Are you going to tell him?"

With a sudden inspiration, Gisella leaned toward her. "Madame," she cried, "you don't need to ask me that, because after this there's not going to be anything to tell! You aren't going to meet this man Boldenave again, are you? No, no, of course not!"

The marquise laughed, an odd, short laugh. "Then how am I to amuse myself," she asked with dangerous sweetness, "while Olivier is off with you?"

Gisella looked at her, hardly knowing what significance to attach to her words. "What?" she asked blankly.

Madame de Lys laughed again. "*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle!" she exclaimed, "don't let us make believe any more! You seem to know a good deal about me—very well, I know a few things myself!" She paused, a cool and dainty figure against the antique richness of the brilliant chimney-piece. "Listen, mademoiselle! you and my husband are pretty good friends, aren't you, with your long hours together in this library every day—and have I ever said a word? I had my suspicions, but I did not *know*, until last night." Her tone sank lower and more threatening. "Last night, mademoiselle, Nanette had occasion to pass your little nunnery down there in Héraucourt—and a glance through the open door showed her who it is that keeps you company in the small hours of the night! Though, really," she added, with a little laugh, "I don't know if I should have been perfectly certain even then, if it had not been for this stupid bluff of Olivier's—coming back to get his horse, just to throw me off the scent of his little amusements. That was a bit *too* finely played, you see, my dear!"

In her austere and secluded maidenhood, Gisella had dwelt so far from the

whisper of fleshly profanation, that the inward meaning of the marquise's words dragged itself haltingly into her mind. Meanwhile Violette, her small face flushed with growing fury, overwhelmed her with a flood of words.

"So now, mademoiselle, that we seem to know each other at last, we'll have a little understanding. You can go to my husband, if you like, with this story: that I have dared to amuse myself occasionally while he is away amusing himself with his little friend. Very well, you can tell him what you know, or what you suspect. But I give you my word that one hour after he comes and speaks to me about my friendship with Gaston Boldenave, there shall not be a man or woman or child in this village who shall not know about the two virtuous people who are set up as models over them, and who scold them when they don't quite toe the mark!" She paused for breath. In a dawning and blinding comprehension, Gisella stood silent, rigid, while the marquise swept on like a tempest.

"So now, I give you your choice. If you meddle with my affairs, you see what you have to expect. On the other hand, keep your mouth firmly closed, as I have kept mine since a certain night in the library about a month ago—and things can go on as they are, comfortable and quiet. There! it's a bargain?"

Gisella leaned against the table for support. Her hands and feet grew cold. Yet so far as her sensations were outlined in her brain, it seemed to her that it was for Olivier's sake she suffered rather than for her own. That he should be married to a woman capable of harboring such thoughts—that anybody in the world should dare say an unclean thing of him!

"Come!" said the marquise impatiently. "I can't wait all night, you know. Shake hands. It's a bargain, isn't it?"

With a smile to which her growing feeling of security had restored its usual charming gaiety, she stretched out her little gloved hand to Gisella. With a gesture as automatic as a recoil

from a serpent, Gisella struck it from her. Madame de Lys, nursing the rejected hand, uttered a shrill little laugh of anger.

"Well, you *are* cool!" she observed and laughed again.

Gisella laid her hand upon her throat in a fierce effort to control its convulsive laboring.

"Madame," she said, "I am not going to Monsieur de Lys with this story; not on account of your threats, but because I still believe, as I have always believed, that it is no part of an outsider to interfere between husband and wife. But as for your silence, which I buy with my own, I must decline to make use of it! You must see for yourself, madame, that I can remain not another instant in a house whose mistress has insulted me. I shall leave immediately, of course. And I will ask you when monsieur returns, to explain my departure to him."

The shrewd fury upon Violette's face dissolved with ludicrous rapidity into the emptiness of childish dismay. "But how?" she cried with plaintive response, "how shall I explain, what shall I say?"

"That," said Gisella, "I leave to you."

"Yes!" cried the marquise, "and have him poke around and ask questions, and find out all sorts of things. And I'll have to fight with him and stick up for myself and tell him what I know—oh, it will be so disagreeable. But if you will only stay, everything can go on as it is, calm and pleasant. No, mademoiselle, you mustn't go!"

"I am going at once," Gisella affirmed softly.

"But where?" asked Violette with a sudden thought. "Home to the village—that's all, isn't it?"

New thoughts boiled up in Gisella's brain. "Home to the village?" she cried. "Then you think, madame, that I could remain here in Héraucourt, when such things have been thought of me—you think that I would stay here, to bring down fresh insults and suspicions on Monsieur de Lys? No, madame, I leave Héraucourt within

the hour. I have an invitation to pass the rest of the Summer in the Pyrenees. I shall go there immediately. And in the Autumn I shall return home to my dear country, where your poisonous slanders will have no power to follow me!"

With rapid gestures, she turned toward the desk. "Will you please tell Monsieur de Lys," she added more calmly, "that the correspondence is all here on the files, and that I am taking the small ledger with me, to send, balanced, within two days at the utmost? If you will have the graciousness to examine it when it arrives, madame, you will see that there is no letter enclosed!" She turned and with trembling hands pinned on her large black hat; her great eyes were like inky spots against the soft young whiteness of her face, and in spite of all her resolution, her scarlet lips trembled in visible distress. She bowed gravely to the marquise. "I have the honor to bid you good-bye, madame!" she said quietly.

But Violette barred her progress with a sudden flash of laughter.

"But how do you intend to leave Héraucourt, mademoiselle?" she cried airily. "Perhaps you do not know that the old monastery on the road to Blois was struck by lightning at dawn this morning. The stones lie in a heap like a mountain, all over the highroad. Nanette brought me this news from one of the grooms, this morning. The peasants are working on it now; but before tomorrow morning, I assure you, mademoiselle, they say that it will be utterly impossible to take a carriage through to the town!"

Gisella started; until this moment she had heard nothing of the ravage wrought by the storm of the previous night, and for a moment the difficulty thus suddenly presented seemed insurmountable. Then, determinedly, "On horseback," she said, "there could be no difficulty of the sort. I shall ride to Blois, madame."

The marquise bubbled with triumphant laughter. "*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle!" she cried, "but your courage

delights me. I think, however, you will hardly have the daring to ride one of Olivier's unbroken Arabians—and you will please remember that every one of the old saddle horses was cleaned out of the stable and sent to market last week, to make way for this fine new importation of young colts from Algiers—twenty of them, mademoiselle, all warranted to break the neck of anyone but their Soudanese trainer. Olivier rode one of them last night—do not break my heart, mademoiselle, by forcing me to behold you departing in a like danger!”

At the mocking raillery of her tone, Gisella quivered in an intensity of resolution. She was too familiar with the practical details of the estate not to know that in her derisive description of the stable's present condition, the marquise spoke the truth. The carriage horses useless, the saddle horses gone! Walking to the window, she looked out through the open casement to the green meadows which stretched along the Loire, below the leaf-grown walls of the park. Over the distant grassy levels grazed a moving herd of jaunty young animals, whose every movement proclaimed their wild freedom from restraint; but for a moment all thought of her present necessity was struck from Gisella's mind by the pathetic and familiar beauty of the well-known scene. This was the last time that she should look upon it—the gray-green slopes of vineyard, the hazy line of the distant plains, and the river whose pale surface reflected tenderly the bordering poplars and the single drifting boat. Suddenly she started and flung out her hand with an ironic gesture.

“See, madame,” she said quietly, “there is another horse down there among that crowd of wild things from the desert—a horse which I know to be comparatively civilized. Have I your permission to borrow it?”

The marquise, joining her at the window, followed the direction of the pointing finger with a stare of astonishment. “My little mare, down there in her own particular meadow,” she said, “my little Fâtîme?”

Gisella nodded. “I shall ask you to have the kindness to lend her to me, madame,” she said firmly. “As it is you, madame, who drive me from the château, it is only fair that you should provide me with the means for leaving. If you will permit me, I will myself go to the stables and explain the case to the head groom. Adieu, madame!”

She turned with a swift, determined step that showed no intention to wait for permission; out by the open casement, down the terrace to the road that led to the stables. The park gate was open, the wide stable-yard was deserted; but a quick step around the corner of some out-buildings brought Gisella face to face with a thin, sandy-haired man in livery, who sat with his pipe on a stone bench beside the carved drinking-fountain.

“Jean-Paul!” cried Gisella in a voice which in spite of herself quavered and ran in broken intonations, “I must be in Blois at seven o'clock, to catch the night express from Paris to Toulouse. Can you take me there?”

The man rose with a respectful and embarrassed salute. “Good God of wood, mademoiselle!” he cried regretfully, “I am desolated that this day, of all the year, mademoiselle asks for a service which it is impossible for me to perform. Has not mademoiselle heard that the highroad to the town is choked with the débris of last night's storm? All the good-will in Touraine could not bring a carriage from Héraucourt to Blois for mademoiselle today!”

At this evidence of the truth of the marquise's words, Gisella paused for a moment in troubled hesitation. “Yes, Jean-Paul, but one could ride, and lead one's horse over the loose heaps of stones. Can you not give me a saddle-horse, Jean-Paul?”

The man shook his head in obvious regret. “Mademoiselle knows how willingly I myself, like all the rest of Héraucourt, would serve her wish! But besides the carriage-horses—who have never had a saddle upon thier backs—there is nothing left in the stables of Héraucourt but these wild flying devils from the Soudan, which

are still as savage as the winds of their own desert." He paused, ruminating. "There are one or two horses in our poor village," he added, "which a lady might ride, but they are out in the hayfields across the river. No, mademoiselle will have to sleep at Héaucourt tonight!"

"Then there is no other horse in your stables?" cried Gisella quickly. "Do you forget Fâtime?"

The servant's eyes before her opened in heavy wonder; then roved from her pale and glittering face to the approaching form of the little marquise. Like an abashed and malicious child, more than like the mistress of the whole establishment, Violette tiptoed, smiling, over the stone pavement of the courtyard. "Fâtime?" echoed the man. "Little Princess Fâtime, mademoiselle, the horse of madame the marquise?"

Gisella turned with a resolute smile to meet Madame de Lys. "I have directed Jean-Paul, madame," she said quietly, "to saddle Fâtime, whom you offered to lend me for my trip to Blois. I promise you, I will treat her with every tenderness."

The marquise stared, then tossed her head airily. "Oh, very well, mademoiselle, as you will!" she said. And at the word, Jean-Paul turned obediently from his stone seat, summoned a stable-boy and walked hurriedly down the winding path that led to the meadows by the river.

The wild Arabians, in their walled field, lifted their arched necks and sniffed suspiciously at the human approach. In the wide paddock beside them grazed a little white mare alone, and as Jean-Paul opened the latticed gateway that led into her solitude, she flung up her dainty head and watched him warily. Gisella turned to go. "Wait a moment, mademoiselle!" cried the marquise with a little smile.

The stable-boy, creeping along over the grass with coaxing noises, put out his hand to seize the forelock of the waiting animal. There was a snort, a flicker of heels and tail, and Fâtime fled, careering in joyful circles, along the

bank of the river and around the three sides of the high paddock walls. Gisella looked on with a qualm of sudden alarm, intensified with terror by a titter from the little marquise at her side. With straining eyes she watched the dignified Jean-Paul himself advance to the wilful animal, which had paused to graze again. Like his young subordinate, he was allowed to approach within touching distance; again the spirited creature, swerving by the breadth of a hair, flung her head away from his hand and capered swiftly over the grass.

With his little military salute, the discreet Jean-Paul returned to the two ladies waiting by the gate. "She is bewitched, our Fâtime," he remarked deferentially, "as she always is, indeed, when madame the marquise honors the paddock with her presence. In such a case, as madame the marquise well knows, she will come to the call of no one but madame!"

With a side glance of arch malice at the sternly impatient Gisella, Violette slipped through the latticed gateway and stood with outstretched hand—a daintily irresistible little figure, in whom Gisella felt, with a kind of wrathful amazement, that one might well believe there lay hidden the whole sum of human attractiveness.

"Come, my treasure!" cried the marquise with a sweet, shrill call, "come, my Fâtime *chérie*!"

Like a dog to his master's whistle, the little mare watched, listened—then trotted obediently across the fields and dropped her nose into Violette's arm. Gisella breathed in long and strangling relief. She had not known with what horror she shrank from the idea of another night in Héaucourt, until now that the threat of its necessity was removed.

"Madame has captured the truant—ah, the good fortune!" cried Jean-Paul in delight, as he hurried back across the field. But as he approached his mistress, she lifted her hand from Fâtime's neck, and took a sudden backward step; so that as the man stretched out his hand toward the animal's head, she turned with a light plume of defiance,

flung up her head, and dashed off again across the field.

Gisella uttered an exclamation of despair at his clumsiness; then as a peal of teasing laughter came suddenly to her ears, she realized that on Madame de Lys's part, at least, the mischance had been no accident.

"It's too bad!" cried Violette with an exaggerated inflection of sorrow. "Here, Fâtime, naughty little chicken to run away from her poor little mistress. Come, come, *mignonnet!*"

Again the mare trotted obediently to her mistress, again Jean-Paul missed his grasp—this time with such obvious intent on the part of Madame de Lys that even the man exclaimed.

"If madame the marquise will have the charity to hold her, for no more than the tenth part of a second . . ." he observed respectfully, and again the smiling Violette lifted her voice and called.

Again the whole play, from capture to escape, was repeated—again and yet again. Gisella, standing beside the gate, watched the proceedings in a kind of rebellious despair. It seemed as though the very forces of nature were working against her and playing into the hand of the woman whose unclean perversity made it impossible for her to spend another night in Héraucourt, and equally impossible for her to go away. She was recalled from the distraction of her thoughts by a sudden cry from Violette.

"Well, what you are going to do now?"

Gisella turned fiercely; a bright spot of color glittered in each cheek, and her eyes shone wildly. "I shall walk!" she answered fiercely.

"But mademoiselle!" protested the respectful Jean-Paul in troubled tones, "to walk to Blois—that is sixteen kilometres! And in this sun—mademoiselle will be exhausted, she will be struck dead by the heat of the sun. Tomorrow, mademoiselle, the road will be open once more; and then with what joy, with what alacrity will I myself take mademoiselle to Blois!"

"I cannot wait till tomorrow," re-

plied Gisella with determination. "You are kind, Jean-Paul, but I must leave Héraucourt at once. I shall find a horse, perhaps, somewhere along the road."

"Or an automobile," put in the marquise sweetly. "It is too bad, is it not, mademoiselle, that we have not one already, here at our poor Héraucourt!"

To this jibe Gisella made no answer, as she turned away in silence. Suddenly, "Wait a moment!" cried Madame de Lys; "wait a moment, mademoiselle!"

She stretched out her hand again to her wilful and devoted pet. In sudden hope that her malice had at last relented, Gisella paused. But as the mare nestled up against her mistress, the two spectators were amazed to see Violette gather up her pale-green skirts with one white-gloved hand, twist the other in the floating black mane, and with a bound like the snapping into place of some light and accurate spring, leap with airy precision upon the animal's back. Gisella took in her breath. In spite of her abhorrence of the rider, she had to acknowledge the amazing skill of the performance, as Fâtime dashed off across the meadow, guided by light touches from her rider's hand.

"A miracle, a miracle!" murmured Jean-Paul in admiration. "Name of a pipe!—Pardon, mademoiselle, but it is like witchcraft, the power that madame the marquise has with that wicked little rabbit of a mare!"

The marquise, turning at the far end of the meadow, came back again at full gallop; and as she swerved to pass the field of whinnying, restless Arabians, her pale-green draperies flew out like a swirl of spray. Then she came cantering toward the gate, her hand upon Fâtime's unbridled, obedient neck, her light form balanced with an artful and floating skill. As an exhibition of horsemanship the exhibition was superb; considering the nationality of the rider, and the unathletic traditions of her race, her skill and daring fell little short of the marvelous. But at such a moment, the sight of that arch and triumphant face could serve only to ex-

aggrate, past endurance, Gisella's black impatience to be gone. It seemed to her that if the whole world were hers for the asking, an immediate escape from Héraucourt would be all that she would ask.

She turned and walked back through the gate, while the marquise's airy tones rang with light jests in her ear. "Don't go, mademoiselle! Wait a moment, to see the final performance. We are going to leap the wall and visit our little friends from Algeria, Fâtime and I!"

Pressing as were Gisella's present difficulties, these words, with their childish vaunt, drew her mind suddenly from her own situation to that of her tormentor. The scene enacted in the library a month before, the limp helplessness of this now defiant figure, her own terror, the marquis's warning words—all these circumstances pieced themselves together in quick, vivid vision before her, as, forgetful of her present causes for resentment, she leaned toward the smiling rider with the imploring cry:

"No, no, madame! Remember what the marquis said—remember, this violent riding is dangerous for you. Please, please do not leap that wall!"

But the marquise, blowing her a mocking kiss from the finger-tips of her little white-gauntleted hand, left for answer only the trail of her own elfish laughter as she wheeled her quivering mare, and directed her course at full gallop toward the wall of the neighboring field. The barrier itself, no more than shoulder high, was no extraordinary leap for a skilful horsewoman; but the delicately balanced perch of the rider upon the unsaddled back of the flying mare—still more, the deadly weakness at the core of her slender frame, filled the watching Gisella with a cold agony of apprehension.

Like a flying spectre, the pale horse and rider whirled straight toward the opposing wall. Like one in a dream, Gisella watched Fâtime's limbs stiffen, and her white body contract in the inverted curves of the leaping animal. With the pale-green figure lightly

perched upon her back, the mare shot upward like a jet of steam from the ground; she cleared the barrier, she dissolved from view on the other side—alone. And beneath the dark vines of the wall lay a little crumpled heap of white and faint sea-green.

For a moment Gisella stood helpless, staring. Then a cry from the staid Jean-Paul recalled her to herself. "Look, look, mademoiselle! Ah, good God of wood! She is dead, madame; the marquise is dead!"

Gisella trembled. "Nonsense!" she said in a voice which she hardly recognized as her own, "nonsense, she is not dead!" And with unsteady footsteps she flew across the field to the side of the little figure, which lay there still silent and motionless.

The marquise lay stretched out upon the turf, her face turned beneath her upflung arm, her pale-green muslins ruffled in confusion about her. With trembling fingers, and a mind from which horror almost took the power of action, Gisella straightened the twisted limbs of the unresisting form, and sought between the lips for a sign of life.

"She is dead!" said Jean-Paul again, as with shaking fingers he made the sign of the cross above the lifeless body.

"Nonsense!" cried Gisella again, sharply, the sight of the man's abject helplessness recalling her suddenly to the exercise of her own powers. "This is only a heart attack; I have seen her suffer from them before. You must carry her to the château, Jean-Paul!"

But the man, in stupid terror, only gazed at her and mumbled prayers between his colorless lips; and Gisella, in an agony of impatience, half-raised the limp, white body in her arms, and cried wildly, desperately, for help. The stable-boy had disappeared, and this walled pasture-land was far from the offices of the château. But as Gisella opened her lips to scream again, suddenly her cry was answered by a voice behind the poplar-fringe of the river—a new cry in a man's voice. Turning, she saw a skiff slip around the

corner of the bank, and come shooting into the shore below her. And as she recognized its solitary occupant, her mind flew back, even for that rushing instant, to the motionless boat that she had seen floating on the river earlier in the afternoon. She knew why it was there, and for whom it waited through the secret hours! Nevertheless, the new-comer stood for help, possibly for success; and it was with a sensation of relief, which almost approached gladness, that she raised her white face to confront his quick approach. With a curious shock of self-consciousness, she saw his eyes flinch before her own. But he spoke quickly.

"What's the matter? Did someone scream? Didn't someone scream?"

Gisella wet her dry lips and forced herself to speak.

"Monsieur Boldenave, the marquise has a heart attack. If she is not taken to the château immediately, she will die. Will you carry her for me, please?"

The distress upon Boldenave's face moved even Gisella's contempt into a sort of inverted pity. "No, she is not dead, my little Violette!" he cried hoarsely, and, flinging himself down on the ground with the convulsive prostration of a child, he pressed his ear to her quiet breast. "There is no sound!" he groaned helplessly; "she is dead, my *chérie*!"

At the insult which the lamentations conveyed toward the unconscious marquise, as well as at this childish wasting of precious moments, Gisella's mind revolted in a sudden flame of rage. "Monsieur Boldenave!" she cried sternly, "once for all, will you carry madame to the château, or must I drag her there by myself?"

With a convulsive effort at self-mastery, the young man raised his miserable face. "You carry her, mademoiselle? No!" he added, with a sudden dramatic defiance. "That, mademoiselle, is my privilege!" And, scrambling to his feet, he stooped again and raised the death-like form in his arms. The head fell limply back, with

its streaming garland of loosened golden hair. In silence the little procession wound up the hill, past rose-gardens and gaping servants and peacocks spreading their bright splendor in the sunshine of the afternoon. And Boldenave did not speak until, in the midst of a sobbing and terrified household, he laid the marquise's body upon the embroidered splendor of her bed.

"Has he come home yet?"

Gisella raised her face quickly from the dusty lace of the toilet-table, where among carved ivory and gem-encrusted crystal she searched wildly, furiously, for the tiny gold key with the two diamonds in the wards.

"Has monsieur the marquis come back yet?" She repeated the question sharply to the group of distracted servants at the door.

A little parlor-maid lifted her voice in wailing reply.

"Monsieur the marquis? No, mademoiselle, not yet! Ah, kind God have mercy! What will he find when he comes at last!"

"Run, Jacquine, Pélagie, all of you!" cried Gisella. "Bring brandy, bring hot water—all that there is in the château. Olympe, go to the cellar and bring ice. And, Hector, run as quickly as you can for the doctor. And Sidonie, go and telephone! Nanette, you undress her as quickly as possible, while I find her medicine."

At this signal of dismissal, Boldenave turned away. "*Au revoir!*" he said. "I will return later to hear whether she lives or dies." He dropped his voice to an accent of sudden ferocity. "It was *he* that drove her to this, the poor little angel! and if she dies——"

With his sentence half-finished he turned and ran from the room.

VII

IN acuteness of experience and in varied pangs and struggles of spiritual sensation, the five minutes succeeding Boldenave's departure stretched themselves out in Gisella's mind and subsequent recollection to a period that seemed to embrace half her life.

For a moment she searched distractedly among the confusion of the toilet-table for the key of the small mother-of-pearl cabinet in which lay, as she knew, the globules of that fiery drug necessary for recalling the life into the insensible body of the marquise. In a kind of amazement at the careless lack of forethought which had made so inaccessible an elixir of such vital importance, she flung gold-topped bottles, old letters and long white gloves together to the winds. After some seconds, infinitely prolonged, of unrewarded search, she cried out upon Nanette to find the key for her, and with hands to which the exigencies of the moment were beginning to restore something of their usual firmness, she applied herself to relieving the slight body from the constriction of its garments. The pearl collar, the gold chatelaine, the floating gossamer of pale-green ribbons and embroidery—in a moment all these insignificant elegancies lay in a heap beside the bed, while Gisella, with the assistance of one of the maids, bathed the cold temples in alcohol and rubbed the bloodless limbs.

"Alas, mademoiselle!" cried Nanette in helpless despair, "why, I ask you, did madame turn the key upon this so precious medicine! If it were not for these bars and clumps of solid silver, I might break this cabinet open with my hands; but ah! good God of wood!"—with a desperate but ineffectual wrench—"it is useless, useless! my little lady must die!"

"Nonsense!" cried Gisella in a voice which, in spite of herself broke and ran like water, "that key is here, I know, and it must be found. After ten minutes, fifteen minutes of this insensibility, there is still hope of her life, if we but find the medicine to give her!"

In a renewed fury of search the maids flung to confusion the filmy scarfs and delicate millinery which, as usual, lay trailing over the fantastic magnificence of the room; while Gisella, bending in resolute effort over the death-like shape between her hands, felt her thoughts flash back inevitably,

involuntarily, to him of whose contemplation they were never weary.

Where, at this moment, was Olivier de Lys? When would he come? What would he say or feel, when he found the loss which perhaps he was to sustain? In spite of herself, Gisella's mind seethed with answers to this last question, which relaxed her hands into a shuddering thrill of pity as she touched the soft, cold bosom which had once been Violette's. A creature so formed for love and joy, to kindle no happiness about her when she lived, to leave no regret behind her when she died! It seemed to Gisella that the unnatural horror of that last fact weighed more heavily upon her than the creeping and final silence in the presence of which she stood. Yes, there could be no sorrow for the poor little Marquise of Lys-de-Héraucourt! For those who knew the shameful inward workings of her life, for the husband whose name she had insulted and betrayed, and whose hopes and labors her caprices condemned to arid sterility—and most of all to her own little blinded and feeble soul, how could its final taking-off come but as a relief and a blessing? With a qualm of self-reproach, Gisella tried to bar her mind against the whisper of these ideas; they seemed a pitiful resentment, a mean advantage taken over the helpless creature toward whom they were directed. But such reflections were too crushingly just to be long excluded. And as her hands toiled in swift efforts to drag back into life the feeble spark of vitality that might even yet lie hidden in that motionless frame, her lips framed themselves in an involuntary prayer that her endeavors might not be crowned with success. In a passion of dread which she herself hardly realized, she searched the half-closed eyes and the pulseless wrists for a sign of life. Nanette, coming back with slow steps from her fruitless search about the room, stood before the bed with bowed head and empty, outstretched hands.

"It is useless, it is finished!" she said slowly. "Ah, sacred Mother of

Mercy, even now I heard her soul rush past me!" And, with a thin-drawn gesture of terror, she clutched the corners of her apron over her ears; and the other maid by the bedside, a gaunt-faced peasant-woman of the province, turned to Gisella with a fierce demand.

"A quoi sert-il, tout ça? C'est fini! Car les pauvres morts, ils sont bien morts!" And she turned away from the bed, her face buried in her hands.

Gisella, in a half-felt reaction of shame for her thoughts of a moment before, stood up and flung a last desperate glance about the room. The little gold clock upon the mantel ticked off the fleeting seconds—no, it was not yet too late! The servants, huddled about the door, sobbed together in long-drawn, shuddering sighs; and Gisella, in silence, turned eyes of fierce questioning through the room whose draggled and distracted splendors seemed now but a symbol of their owner's wasted beauty.

Suddenly her gaze, returning to the velvet rug at her feet, was riveted by a tiny, glittering object attached to the Venetian chatelaine which only a moment before she had stripped from the marquise's girdle and flung carelessly upon the floor. With burning eyes, she stooped for a closer examination of her discovery. Yes, the tiny key of wrought gold, with its two glittering points of light—there it lay before her, the key of the secret cabinet, the talisman through which she might renew the throb of life in that quiet breast beneath the embroidered hangings and the rosy gamboling shepherdesses of Watteau.

In strange, involuntary hesitation, Gisella raised her eyes; she was alone beside the bed, for the servant-women, pressed close together for company, wept and muttered in the doorway. No one but herself had seen the sparkle of that new-found key; and in a sudden shock which was not without its own subtle exhilaration, she realized that without her aid the submerged soul beneath her touch could never struggle back again into the upper world.

Suddenly, from the subconscious springs of her nature an impulse boiled up which held her motionless; as in fleeting vision her thoughts ran back over the happenings of the last twenty hours. The face of despair which, the night before, the marquis had unconsciously shown to her; his wife's degraded slanders of him, a bare half-hour ago—and above all, the extravagant words of the adventurer Bolde-nave, with their shameful revelation of unspeakable dishonor—all these recollections rose within her mind, in stern cumulative condemnation of the relaxed and bloodless shape before her. After all, was it her duty to call the spirit of Violette de Lys back to such a life as that which she had deliberately chosen?

In humanity, in law, in every idea to which Gisella had been reared, there was only one answer to this question; but the force that stirred with her bore down all reason and restraint, whether hereditary or acquired. The life that fluttered so savagely within her seemed no longer the same hesitating soul with which she had dwelt so long, but a new creature, of untamed instinct and undoubting purpose—a momentary incarnation of the hot, wild strain which so long had lain dormant in her blood.

"Yes, I will let her die!" she said fiercely to herself, "but it's not to myself. No, for what she said to me I forgive her freely! But it's for him—yes, to free him from this burden and this dishonor, I will take this responsibility upon my soul. He thinks he wants nothing from me—but this much, at least, I can do for him!"

Slowly she rose to her feet. The gaunt Turenienne rushed forward and clung to her hand. "You've given up, mademoiselle?" she whimpered. "She's surely dead?"

"She is dead!" replied Gisella briefly, and turning away she left the room in possession of the frightened maids. The parlor-maid put out her hand as Gisella passed, and touched her with a strange timidity. "You have done well, mademoiselle," she whispered quaveringly. "You could not bring the

life back, but you did well, thanks to the good God!"

Gisella broke away from her hand and fled headlong down the great, carved stairway. It seemed to her that the air of the château suffocated her, and flinging open the wide bronze door she dashed down the stone steps into the garden. In the last few moments the day had changed; hills and river alike had disappeared behind a wall of wet land-mist which swept its thin, gray rollers through the tree-tops and past the looming turrets of the château. Gisella, turning back, looked up at the battlements with a little shudder. Perhaps at that very moment an escaping soul was rising silently through those misty eaves!

She sat down on a garden seat of gray stone beside the driveway, and leaned her chin upon her hand. She felt no faltering in her purpose, but she was tired, and her limbs were stiff from her unsparing labors. A thought followed and haunted her—that of pity for the Immensity who fills the universe and who decides the question of life and death for a million worlds. Surely, not even the power to ride upon the wings of the wind, or to loose the bands of Orion, would be recompense sufficient for bearing through all the hours and minutes of eternity, a responsibility such as this!

She stood, as it were, on a point in space, weighing through infinity the two worlds of choice presented to her. What she was doing was right—yes, to free Olivier de Lys from the frail and deadly coils which were strangling his life and its noble purpose—to pluck Violette from the unclean mesh in which she had involved herself and leave her, pure and silent, to the restored virginity of death. But if, on the other hand, it were a sin for a mortal thus to take upon herself the prerogative of God—very well, then, she was willing to pay the penalty. In a flash of wild fancy, it seemed to her that her doom would be more subtly exquisite even than that of Francesca—not with him she loved "together to be blown about the globe," but alone, to all eternity, to suffer for his sake!

Suddenly the silence behind the wall of white mist was broken by a new sound, the rhythmic beat of approaching horses' feet. Gisella, locked in the chamber of her own thoughts, did not glance up nor stir until suddenly, with a wild spatter of gravel from hoofs checked in full course, a horse was drawn up snorting and quivering before her. Looking up through the dim and cloudy air, she met the eyes of Olivier de Lys.

His appearance was so sudden, so unexpected, that it seemed not himself so much as a projection of her own thoughts that she saw before her. Immeasurably distant from the world of every-day speech, she rose to her feet and looked up at him in silence. With a faint, exterior shock of surprise, like the surface of the ocean wrinkling to the wind, she noticed that his face was white and sunken like Violette's own, and his eyes looked at her strangely.

"Gisella!" he said hurriedly, "what are you doing here? What is the matter with you?" She did not answer, and he repeated his question, checking his impatient horse with a harsh and impatient hand. "What has happened to you?" he cried again. Gisella continued to stare up at him in silence. Somebody else must tell him what had happened. She had already done her utmost for him, and she could do no more.

Presently, beneath her gaze, the marquis's strong features lit and melted in a quick and reckless flash. With the reins twisted in his hand, he leaned down toward her from the saddle in which he sat. "Gisella!" he said, "I see you feel what I feel. There is no use in silence any longer. You know, don't you, what I have been riding away from, all last night and all today? You know why I have tried so hard to do my full duty toward my wife, these past months? You know why I have asked you to go away? Yes, with God's help, Gisella, I am going to act like an honest man to you—to you and to the memory of your grandfather. You must leave Héraucourt, Gisella, today; tomorrow you must go away!"

The young Arabian, grinding impatient and weary heels upon the gravel, leaped suddenly beneath his rider's hand. With a fierce tightening of the reins, the horseman jerked the quivering beast back upon its haunches. "Be still, you devil!" he cried violently; then, leaning down again from the saddle bow, "I love you, Gisella," he said passionately, "from the first day I saw you, to the last day of my life. You are beautiful, standing there in the mist, with the thin drops like frost on your dark hair! I love you, Gisella!"

He relaxed his hand upon the reins, the freed animal sprang forward; and with a clatter of iron shoes, horse and rider whirled off into the thick, white fog. Gisella, standing motionless, watched the soft, impenetrable wall that closed behind them. As in the crystal ball of the sorcerers, she saw pictured there a tender vision of the future—of herself sharing Olivier's life, his work, his love.

Suddenly, in a quick clairvoyant flash, her inward eye glanced beneath this enchanting surface, to the core and foundations upon which it was reared. Could she ever own to de Lys the action by which she had swept away the obstacle to their happiness—and with that secret consciousness upon her soul, would her happiness be anything but an unreal and hollow sham? In a quick and effortless shock of memory, her mind ran back to her childhood and to the old man by whose judgment she had tested every little problem of those far-off days. As in a dream, she seemed to hear his kind old voice in her ear. "Remember, my child, if by a lie you could bring down heaven to earth, you would find that it was not heaven, after all."

With a half-breathed cry of sudden fear, she turned quickly toward the château. What she was doing was impossible—for Olivier's sake she could dare to lay violent hands upon the laws of God; but if she herself were to profit by the breach, wherein did her action differ from that of the most ordinary sinner?

She shook like a leaf in the wind of

a sudden fear. Suppose, after all, it was too late to draw back—suppose that from Violette's enfeebled frame the fluttering soul had already taken its flight! With frantic steps she rushed through the fog, up the steps to the open front door, through the empty hallways to the room which in such unbending resolution she had quitted—how long ago? she asked herself in a sickening qualm of dread. An hour? two hours? In her whirling consciousness there was no count of time, and it was with a throb of almost terrified amazement that she read in the little gold clock upon the chimney-piece before her, a lapse of barely five minutes since that far-off moment when she had turned her back upon the bed and gone away.

The room was empty, save for the quiet figure beneath the satin canopy, and the little servant-woman who kneeled with closed eyes and tapping rosary beside the bed. Beside the foot-board with its rosy Watteau panels burned two candles—mute emblems of the passing soul which seemed a visible confirmation of all that Gisella dreaded most. In a quick gesture of abhorrence she flung the ominous lights to the floor, and seizing the kneeling woman's shoulder with her other hand, she shook her in a desperate tempest of energy.

"Nanette!" she cried, "perhaps we were mistaken—perhaps we gave up too soon!"

She snatched the chatelaine from the floor. In a moment the pearl and silver cabinet, yielding to the click of the tiny key, had given up its mysterious treasures of hollow crystal. And Gisella, snapping the glass globule between the firm, white teeth, forced its pungent and life-giving contents through the wan lips of the little figure which yielded so limply to her touch. "Ring the bell, Nanette! Tell them to ring up the whole province, till they find the doctor. It's barely fifteen minutes yet; we must not give up hope!"

As she spoke, she applied herself frantically to her former furious efforts

at recalling the vanished breath. In obedience to the summons of Nanette, the frightened maids crept back to help her. Suddenly she heard a quick and heavy step down the tiled corridor; a moment later, the marquis entered the room.

His face, white and drawn though it was, had lost all trace of its recent agitation. Carefully, like a man putting some strong restraint upon himself, he crossed the room to the bedside, and looked down at the stony mask of Violette's white face.

"Is she—dead?" he asked abruptly.

Gisella, continuing her efforts, did not raise her face. "No!" she cried, in horror of his words, "she's not dead! Can't you see she's going to live?"

De Lys stooped down calmly. "You think so? Well—I do not know." He paused a moment and spoke again, quietly. "You see, I met someone just now, waiting for me at the stables, who told me—who told me that she was dead. . . . Poor Violette! Poor little child!" He stood for a moment silent with bowed head, then, with a sudden thought:

"Mademoiselle, you are very skilful, but you must be tired now. Will you let me help you?"

She nodded a swift assent. With eyes averted painfully and hands that shrank from meeting, they labored side by side to bring back from its hiding-place the life that must forever divide them. In spite of continued efforts at the telephone, it was nearly an hour later when the doctor arrived; but long before that time Violette's reluctant soul had crept painfully back into her feeble and shuddering body.

VIII

THE next morning Gisella rose before daylight to pack her trunks and put her little house in order; so that by the time the village about her had waked with its daily life, she was ready to go down to the *verrière* to wind up her affairs there, and to say good-bye to the friends among whom she had worked so long. In spite of herself,

she found something soothing in the general dismay which followed the announcement of her approaching departure. The superintendent shook his head gravely.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* How do you suppose this office is going to work, without you coming in every day to see us, mademoiselle?" he said; and the woman who waited by his desk, and whom Gisella had befriended, lifted up her voice in an unsteady wail. "Ask mademoiselle how she thinks we're going to get on without her, we poor wretches in this sacred hole of a village!" she cried sadly, and laid a hard brown hand for an instant upon Gisella's. In spite of herself, Gisella's sorrowful heart was touched with a little comfort. In one thing, at least, she had not been altogether a failure!

After a short period of work and of leave-taking, she finally turned away from the door. There was still an hour or two before she should leave to take her train at Blois, and she swiftly calculated the amount of time which she could apportion to each of her humble friends in the village. In spite of herself, her eye dragged itself back to the green heights above her, and the beautiful hexagonal towers of the chateau, which reared its gray walls so imposingly upon the slope of the hill. There, at least, there could be no farewell visit! Even while her heart contracted in the pain of that thought, she was conscious of a secret, inner glow. Painful, tragic as were the reasons which divided her forever from this kindly home, life could not be wholly without its compensations for the woman who had once heard from the lips of the man she loved, that she was equally dear to him!

Suddenly her ear was caught by a sudden cry from behind. "Mademoiselle! For the love of God, one moment, mademoiselle!"

Turning, she beheld the lean and awkward figure of young Hector hastening toward her. "I come from the house of mademoiselle," he panted; "then I sought her at the factory, and now I find her at last!"

A thousand questions and possibilities rushed into Gisella's mind. "What is the matter?" she asked sharply.

Hector, hurrying along by her side, had no answer beyond the statement that he had been sent to find her. "It is madame the marquise," he explained briskly. "She is recovered fully this morning; it seems she demands broiled chicken and hot chocolate, and above all—name of a name!—she demands to see mademoiselle!"

What motive the marquis could have for desiring her presence, it was beyond Gisella's imagination to divine. She shrank from the interview before her, yet to refuse such a request at such a time seemed a piece of resentful harshness which she could not bring herself to consider. At the door of the marquise's room, Nanette was waiting.

"Ah, mademoiselle, but madame will be content to see you!" she cried; and opening the door she hurried Gisella into the room. For the flutter of a moment, her eyelids closed themselves convulsively: yesterday with its cold fear, its hot and terrible temptation, seemed in this room to start into bodily shape before her.

Beside the bed she saw the black-clad form and patient eyes of a nursing Sister from Blois—whom at dawn an urgent messenger had brought as the first traveler over the newly-opened road.

"Is she come, my Sister?" asked a faintly urgent voice from the bed. For a moment, Gisella stood hesitating; then she was amazed to hear the slow answer of the quiet Sister anticipated by the deep, vibrant tones of a well-known voice. "Yes, she is here, Violette!" and the tall form of Olivier de Lys started from the great arm-chair at the bed's head.

His voice, as he greeted her, showed no sign of unusual feeling; but his face was white, and his eyes were the eyes of a man who has not slept for nights. In a new and amazed consciousness that it was she herself—she and none other who was the instrument of his pain, Gisella's heart stirred in a tender and self-reproachful pity, in which her

own sufferings seemed to merge and heal themselves.

"Good morning, mademoiselle," he said quietly; "this is kind of you, indeed!"

There was a voice from the bed, a little voice, hoarse and feeble, speaking from very far away. "Is that you, mademoiselle? Come here, please!"

For Violette, dead or struggling back to life, Gisella could have pity and succor as for any creature in pain, or for a mere suffering abstraction. But the sound of that voice, strained and altered though it might be, lit again within her consciousness the reflected flame of that personality which for a while had been submerged in the general void. Yesterday, a symbol of the Infinite mystery; today, Violette de Lys, a little creature with a white face and sharp, blue eyes—a little soul without faith or hope or charity. With a strong effort to control the repulsion which she felt showed forth in her face, Gisella approached the bed. For a moment the two women regarded each other in silence, while the Sister withdrew to a window and de Lys stood gravely by. Then Violette drew in her unsteady breath and said:

"I am only allowed to talk for a few moments at a time, so I must be quick! First, I hear it was you who pulled me back to life again, when everybody had given me up for dead. So I want to say, thank you, mademoiselle!"

In some surprise, Gisella took the little, hot hand which Violette raised to her. Looking down, it seemed to her that the first glance had deceived her—that the face over which she bent was not, after all, the face which she had always known. What the change was she could not say; it was not the pallor, nor the blue shadows about the eyes—something deeper, something subtler than the mere signs of physical exhaustion. After a few moments' pause, the marquise began to speak again.

"I hear you are going away today, mademoiselle. I don't know whether anything I can say can make any difference now—but I want to tell you, I am

very sorry for what I said to you yesterday. I didn't really think it was true, you know; I only said it to be horrid. Will you forgive me, please?"

The first shock of Gisella's amazement at hearing from Violette's lips these words of contrition and kindness, was overborne by her horror lest the marquis understood the subject of the apology. Involuntarily she shot a fearful glance toward his grave and immovable face. Violette, reading her thought, laughed brokenly.

"No, don't be afraid, mademoiselle; he doesn't know a word! But you will forgive me, won't you? Because, indeed, I am very sorry."

In an outburst of pitying joy, Gisella knelt down beside the bed and clasped the marquise's little hand in both her own. "With all my heart," she said earnestly, "I forgive you!"

"Thank you," replied Violette gently; "it sounds very nice, you know, to hear you say that!"

The marquis approached the bedside. "Violette, don't you think you have talked long enough? The doctors will be here in a moment—they mustn't find you exhausted!"

Violette shot her blue eyes up at him from the pillow, in one of her old, bright, wistful glances. "Nonsense!" she murmured in her slow, hoarse voice, "I'm not sick—just a trifle tired, that is all! But there's something—something—oh, I'll be sick indeed, just thinking of it, if you don't let me say a little bit more, Olivier!"

He shook his head uncertainly. "Very well, but say as few words as you can, Violette!"

She hesitated a moment, tightening her grasp on Gisella's hand. "You thought, all these hours of the morning I've been lying here, that I was thinking of nothing at all. But no! I've been thinking—what would have become of me if I had really died last night. Not that I should have been afraid, you see! But I think I should have been—very ashamed." She paused a moment, catching her breath. "But now, it seems, I've had another chance given me! And I want to tell

you, Olivier, I'm going to be very different in the future. I've been a bad wife to you, I know it—no, don't contradict me, because I know! Vain and extravagant and selfish—yes. But after this, I'm going to try and be a help to you, instead. I'm going to try, oh, so hard! And you'll help me, too, in trying to be good—won't you, dear?"

With a wistful earnestness that touched her pale little features with a pathetic beauty, she lifted her face to her husband's. "Yes, Violette," he said quietly, and, stooping down, he kissed her cheek.

But with a cry which amazed the two who knelt beside her, she lifted her trembling hand and struck his face violently away. "You mustn't kiss me!" she cried unsteadily. "Oh, you don't know!"

Gisella's heart leaped in a kind of terror. What was Violette about to say? It seemed to her that no price on earth could repay her for the pain of witnessing Olivier's face when such a confession should be made to him. She tried to rise to her feet, but Violette's clinging hand held her fast.

"No, I want you to stay. I want you both to hear me tell how wicked I have been . . ." Her voice trailed off, faint and quivering with a new emotion; then, as she caught her feeble breath to speak again, her husband raised his hand.

"No, Violette, you do not need to tell me. I know already."

Gisella surveyed him in a kind of horrified amazement. So he knew, after all—when and how had the knowledge come to him? As in a dream, she heard Violette's startled cry, and the marquis's voice answering steadily:

"Yesterday afternoon when I came home, I met—I met Boldenave waiting for me at the stables. He had a notion in his head, apparently, that I knew—that I knew more than I did, and that it was my fury that had driven you to make an end to yourself. So he thought it was his duty, you see, to punish me."

The marquise looked up at him from

her embroidered pillow, her large eyes touched with awe, as one in the presence of a new-born mystery. She whispered brokenly:

"You knew, all the time—and you never said a word—and just now, you kissed me!"

De Lys regarded her gravely. "What right have I to judge you?" he said slowly. "We must have charity for each other, Violette." And stooping over, he kissed her white cheek again.

Two large tears trickled shining from Violette's eyes. "How you love me!" she murmured, with a little sigh, "and to think I never appreciated it before!"

Then, with the quick little cry of a sudden thought, she turned with feeble energy to him. "But you mustn't think," she panted, "that I'm any worse than I am, Olivier: I've been silly and wicked—but oh, not *that*! Thank God, I can still come back and be your own loving wife again, my Olivier *chéri*!"

There was a knock at the door, and Nanette's head peered in anxiously. "The doctors from Blois, madame!" she announced, and Gisella, rising to her feet with a swift "Good-bye," hurried feverishly from the room. What she felt she did not know. In the loneliness of her new life, she reflected, she would have plenty of time for balancing that problem within herself.

She hastened down the tapestried stairway to the great entrance hall; then, remembering that there still remained in the library some legal reports to be catalogued, she turned and retraced her way to the door at the end of the hall. She entered with little steps, as one enters a tomb. The familiar apartment was dark and empty, except for the small model which hummed in detached and careless life upon the work-table.

Forgetful, for the moment, of the errand which had brought her to the room, she stood beside the machine which to her symbolized so much of de Lys's life. So absorbed was she in this contemplation, that she did not hear steps entering the door behind her, or

turn her head until she heard a well-known voice saying in her ear:

"Yes, it is finished at last. This morning, I solved the problem of its construction which has eluded me for so long."

Gisella, turning quickly, met the marquis's eyes. But even in the shock of that encounter, wherein each read what lay in the other's heart, their lips continued to move in the calm groove of those common interests which they had pursued together for so long.

Gisella bent over the whirring miniature. "You have succeeded at last? Oh, I am glad!"

De Lys answered her calmly. "Yes, last night, after Madame de Lys fell asleep, I came down here and worked. Just before breakfast time, I hit suddenly upon the notion that I had been searching for for years—you know, the problem of molding the tempered crystal without marring the beauty of its finish. Look, the resin on this extra emery-wheel, and this new acid!"

Gisella examined the mechanism which he pointed out to her. "This is an important invention," she said hurriedly, "which should, I am sure, have widely felt results. You are going to apply for your patent, and put it on the market immediately?"

With a sudden gesture of his hand, de Lys turned out the burner beneath the tiny furnace; the whirring rollers slackened, hesitated, and were still. "No," he answered in slow response to Gisella's question, "no, I don't know that I am going to do anything about it!"

Gisella stared at him. "What?" she cried.

He met her eyes gravely. "In fact," he said, "I think that my work here has come to an end. I have decided to leave my interests here to my agent, and go away." He paused for a moment. "Where we shall go," he resumed, "I have not yet quite decided. Perhaps to Paris—perhaps for some years' travel in the East. But at all events, *this* is finished."

He threw out his hand with a gesture comprehending the château, the village

and the factories beyond. Gisella stood silent. The reason for his abandonment of work and home she felt in a passion of painful bliss, and for that very reason she dare not remonstrate with his decision. The time for her departure was drawing near; she turned, summoning all her energies to say her final good-bye, when suddenly she heard the marquis's voice, quick and changed, in her ear:

"Gisella! when you went back yesterday, and worked over Violette after she had been given up for dead—it was after you had met me in the garden, was it not?"

She nodded silently. De Lys leaned toward her with sudden eagerness.

"Tell me, Gisella, are you glad that you went back?"

"Yes," she answered resolutely, "I am glad!"

There was a pause. The marquis moved to the window, then walked back with sudden passion. "Gisella," he said, "now that I have said so much, there can be no harm in asking you one question before you go. Do you love me?"

Gisella met his eyes steadily. It seemed to her that it was from infinitely far-off that she looked upon him, from behind the mists that hide the springs of life, from the further shore of the river of death. "Yes," she said, "I love you."

There was a pause. He did not speak, but she heard his breath come and go—the frail corporeal life asserting itself even in the death-agony of the spirit. Then she heard his voice saying:

"And yet you say you are glad you came back!"

They stood face to face, all reserve of conventionality torn away from between them. In a sudden necessity for speech, Gisella leaned toward him with hands outstretched.

"Yes, I am glad!" she cried. "Can't you see, I had to come back? Can't you see, I have to be glad that she did not die—and oh, you must beglad, too!" She pressed closer to him unconscious of everything but the driving force of

her thoughts. Before the radiant and unconscious beauty of her trembling red lips and kindling eyes, de Lys clenched his hands and turned his head away. Without noticing his agitation, Gisella went on:

"Listen—suppose she had died yesterday, suppose her soul had crystalized into eternity, made up of nothing but frivolity and evil! But now, that plunge into the darkness has brought her back into a little glimmer of the light. She has found a new soul, faith and tenderness—and oh, should not that be enough for us?" Gisella's voice rose, her great eyes shone deep and dark, her cheeks flushed to a quivering crimson. The marquis, glancing at her, turned his head away again as by an effort of convulsive will.

"Isn't that enough for us?" she asked again; "for think, why are we working out all these prosaic plans and little tiresome details, every day and all day long—what is our goal that we think we see beyond all these things? Isn't it to leave the world just a little better than we found it—the healing of human pain and sin, the quickening of human souls?"

The marquis nodded gravely, his eyes resting on hers. "Then here is our success!" she cried again, "here at hand, so close to us that we can hardly see it—here is a human soul turned away from its own darkness, to the light of truth and love. Isn't this success? Isn't this a truer reward for our work and our belief, than all the happiness which we might have had together?" At his continued silence, her resolute voice quivered with a little creeping weakness. "Please say yes," she implored him brokenly, "for how am I to keep on believing that it is so, unless you think so, too?"

He answered her painfully. "Yes, Gisella. Yes, you are right, of course! I ought to be ashamed of my feebleness, when I see you so faithful and so strong. But I own, the idea of facing the future without your presence and encouragement—it's too much for me."

She smiled at him with twitching lips. "No, no, you must not say that,

you mustn't think it. You won't give up—you'll go on with your work here at Héraucourt, won't you? Please, please—not because I ask it, but because it's your life, and you mustn't turn away from it. Your *verrerie* and your poor people—you mustn't desert them. You'll keep straight on, won't you?"

He nodded. "Yes, Gisella. But I am afraid—because you ask it!"

She laughed quickly, in an irrepressible pang of human joy. "Very well, we won't quarrel about that!—But now, isn't it time for me to go? I'm going away, you see!"

"Yes, yes, I had forgotten!" he replied hurriedly. "You are going down to the Pyrenees, to my aunt whose letter I gave you yesterday?"

She nodded. "I sent her a message this morning," she said; then, holding out her hand to him, "and in the Autumn, I return to America. Good-bye," she added simply.

He took her hand in both of his; and for the instant of that warm and sentient contact, there flamed up between them that mysterious aura which is the resultant of two reacting temperaments—the unchastened passion, the fierce rebellion, the clinging tenderness. Until that moment Gisella's heart had cherished no dreams of a recompensing joy, had asked nothing save the inalienable right to give; but that meager and fleeting union lit within her consciousness a sudden piercing realization of the infinite rewards of love—its sustaining sympathies, its secret joys no less holy because born of the earthly instincts within us.

In terror of herself and of the new mysterious forces which stirred within her, she snatched her hand from his. His face, dark and bright, was very near her own. "Gisella, listen," he said in a high, stern voice. "I am a cad and a coward—I know it, dear, to speak of my love—when if I offered it to you, I could offer you nothing but dishonor. That, please God, never! But all the laws and forces of heaven cannot stop me from telling you this once, only this once, how dear you

are to me! That day in your grandfather's little apartment in Paris, when I first saw you—a tall, thin child, with your dark hair braided and your beautiful brown eyes that met mine so candidly!—that very first day, I think, I began to love you, though it was not till later, when I had brought you and your grandfather here to Héraucourt, that I realized how deep and dangerous to us both that love might become. I have fought against it, heaven knows! I have tried to be loyal to this poor little wife of mine, when all the time your clear soul and your dear lips were calling, calling to me—ah, *mon Dieu*, you do not know the painful bliss, the exquisite agony of joy that your presence has brought me, as we worked here silently side by side! There is not an atom of you, from your delicate feet to this wonderful dark hair of yours, that is not dearer to me than my own flesh—but also, I swear before heaven, there is not in my soul a pure or an honorable impulse that is not dedicated to you. Go away, please, dear! Go away quickly, my little Gisella!"

For a moment she felt his arms about her, his hot lips on her cheek. Then, with a sudden inarticulate sound of despair, he stepped back from her side. His face was averted, but she saw his shoulders quiver and stiffen themselves in lines of resolute pain. This was her last glimpse of him as she walked from the room—the picture which, she told herself in a kind of dull anguish, she would carry in her heart until she died.

As she stood upon the threshold, trying to compose her face into a mask with which she might face the world, she heard steps flying down the wide stone staircase and, turning, she found herself encountering the blanched face of Nanette.

"Mademoiselle, oh, mademoiselle! come quickly!" she gasped, and Gisella, starting forward, seized her by the arm. With the passionate distress of the recent parting still fresh upon her, she spoke dimly, gropingly to the trembling woman before her.

"What is it, Nanette?"

With a shaking hand laid about her shoulder, Nanette half-pulled, half-dragged her up the broad gray stairs. "Listen, mademoiselle! You saved her yesterday—can you do nothing today?"

"What do you mean?" cried Gisella, in suddenly comprehending terror.

"Listen, mademoiselle! A moment after you left, even as the doctors were speaking with madame the marquise, she breathed a little sigh and turned over in her bed like a child going to sleep. The doctors worked over her, mademoiselle; they gave her the magic medicine from the glass drops, they rubbed her, they listened with strange instruments at the gateway of her poor breast. And now—they have left her lying there, silent and cold."

Gisella, half-fainting, flung her hand upon the wide stone balustrade for support. "The doctors—what do they say?" she asked painfully.

The servant-maid raised up her voice in a shivering wail. "They say, mademoiselle, that this time her heart is stopped forever—she is dead!" she answered through her sobs.

And as, clinging to each other for support, the two women walked falteringly down the broad corridor to the door of the silent chamber, the servant opened her white lips to speak again.

"Ah, the seven sorrows of the Virgin Mother!" she cried. "What news for monsieur the marquis—who in all Héraucourt will dare to break it to him?" She hesitated; then, with a sudden thought, she added gravely: "You, mademoiselle, who fear nothing in life or death—it is you who must go downstairs and knock on the great door of the library, to tell monsieur the marquis that his beautiful marquise is dead!"

Without a word of response, Gisella pushed back the door of the room whose discordant pinks and scarlets and meaningless gleams of gold shone distractedly in the morning sun. Beside the open window, the two doctors packed their instruments and whispered gravely together. Upon the bed, beneath the azure panels whose rosy shepherdesses simpered down to all eternity, lay stretched a little golden-haired figure, silent and motionless; and by the bedside stood a slender, emaciated form whose flowing black robes and stiff, white bands made a strangely incongruous blot against the gay silken embroidery of the canopy.

As Gisella advanced into the room, the Sister, turning, laid one finger upon her colorless lip, and, raising the other thin hand in the air, she made the solemn sign of the cross.



Q. E. D.

By Gordon Russell

"IF ALL the geese were swans, lad—"
How oft is Kingsley's quip
Hurtled, with nod sagacious,
From wise parental lip.

I view not in this statement,
A wisdom so profuse;
The geese are not "all swans, lad,"
So what the—what's the use?

There's only one deduction
In logic, to unloose;
"If all the geese were swans, lad,"
We couldn't have roast goose.

AT TIO JUAN

A STORY OF THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

By Mary Austin

IT is not probable that all the threads of this story have come together in any one hand except it be that of the priest who confessed Jean Rieske when he died. Shepherds are a solitary folk and in the nature of their occupation do not often foregather in great numbers; but where two or three are met together at shearings or when they pay the license at Tres Pinos for the privilege of the Long Trail, or in chance encounters by coyote-scaring fires, by little and little dribbling through their slack speech you gather the least they know and all they guess of what happened to Red Narcisse Duplin at Tio Juan.

The Long Trail is no trail at all upon the maps, but well they know it who have traveled it up from the coast hill-ranges when, after a Winter of scant rains, the filaree curls, crisping, on the slopes. It lies along the eastern flank of the Sierras, bounded on the one side by unalterable desert, narrowed on the other by the encroachments of the forest reserves, until, in many stretches of days' journeys, it is scarcely more than a lane of close-browsed shrubs. But when Narcisse Duplin first took his sheep toward Tres Pinos it was not so. He would come up from Poso, where he had lands for use in lambing time, and work out by way of Greenhorn, cross through Walker's Pass and strike into the Long Trail above Coyote Holes, follow it at a sheep's pace to Tres Pinos, from there striking west or north as his shepherd's instinct for pasture led him.

Narcisse was born a shepherd in Auvergne and put to the care of a flock as

soon as he could walk, but as he grew the land seemed to shrink and cramp him, so with such coin as he had—it was not much—and with a sheep-bell or two which he had grown to love as a man might the sound of his mother's voice, he came to that strip of country between Tremblor and the Minarettes, west of the desert and east of the San Joaquin, and inevitably to the care of sheep, first as a herder and afterward as an owner. When his sheep had become two bands he began to be known on the great thoroughfare which is called the Long Trail, between Poso and the snow-fed pastures of the north. That way he took when the golden poppies warmed all the river bluffs of Poso, and that way he came when the hills were steeped in the opal mists of November, twice in the year with half a dozen dogs and two herders of his own hiring. Always coming and going, he stopped at Tres Pinos to have a bottle with Jules Moynier and make love to Suzon or to crack the skull of any shepherd who dared attempt the same in his presence. For that was the way with Narcisse; he would have a whole allegiance or none. One must either love him or hate him; he would have nothing half-way. All who hated him feared him a little, all who loved him feared him very much. The herders loved him as did his dogs; Jules Moynier hated him, and Suzon—but you shall hear.

He was a red one, was Narcisse, red head, red beard, red the hair on his red sunburned arms and his wide chest, over which the kerchief hung loosely in all weathers. Red was his mouth, and

the teeth in it white and strong, and a red spark came in his eye when he loved or hated, both of which he did heartily. Strong he was and stocky of build and exceedingly long in the arms. Three sheep could he lift and carry, no weather-stress wore him and no labor of the flock fatigued. Laugh he would when the sheep were fat and the fleeces heavy, laugh when the ewes sickened or the Santa Anna came up in a golden cloud that smelled of dust and shriveled the lambs like young grass, laugh when he tricked another herder of the feed, laugh equally if he were tricked, or while he cracked the herder's head. The joy of life was strong in him; it came out gurgling and tripped him in his speech, widened the red lips in a smile between his words. So hearty he was even when he used you ill that it was a wonder anyone should hate him, and even Jules Moynier, who was no smiler, did not until he learned about Suzon.

Jules dealt in merchandise at Tres Pinos, and the best of the customers were the French traders who worked over the Long Trail in the Spring and Fall and brought him their trade for his name's sake. For it is as true as that wandering shepherds are mostly French that they stick by one another in any matter not directly touching the feed.

Jules had a grasping soul, a greedy, self-seeking soul that asked but one question of every occasion: What could it do for Jules? Therefore, though he began to hate Narcisse Duplin as soon as he saw his gaze go softly toward Suzon and the red spark come in his eyes as he looked, he kept it to himself on account of trade. But he made Suzon aware of it, and the girl, because she was forbidden to think at all of the red, laughing man, thought the more and tenderly.

When Narcisse first came to Tres Pinos with his sheep, Suzon was hardly so high as his shoulder, straight, with young budding breasts, and the color of an apricot. Having no mother she kept her father's house and waited upon customers. She had a way,

quick and warm, that won her at times the censure of women, but not a man of the French herders would have admitted any harm in her; wilful she was, and uninstructed because she had no mother, but wholesome and clean-hearted. She won the love of the herders with a laugh, and, laughing, put by their protestations; but not after Narcisse had looked at her with the red spark in his eye. Such was the will and force of the man that having no more than looked he kept her constant to a thought. What she gave, she gave wholly and held to steadfastly. Red Narcisse saw that she was good and for a year did no more than look, and that was not his usual way with women. The more he looked the more he desired her and was for that reason silent. He saw that it would come to marriage at last and marriage is not to be lightly thought of among shepherd folk in the rainless West. For the two months of lambing time Narcisse was at his place at Poso, the rest of the year abroad with the flock, seeking pasture. Under such circumstances there is little comfort to be got from a wife in the best of times. Nevertheless, he looked and desired. Suzon, growing aware of it, flushed and warmed, filled out bodily, became a sobered and passionate woman.

It was by this time, much too late, that Jules Moynier began to hate Narcisse Duplin and covered his hate with politeness. Narcisse, who read the old man to the bottom of his fearful, covetous soul, laughed.

It was the Spring of the year when Red Narcisse first asked Suzon to marry him, Spring of the year with the wild almond coming into flower, brown streams running full and a smell of fruitful earth in the air. They said nothing to old Jules about it, for he had left no doubt as to his sentiments on that score and their joy was too young to be troubled by it, and Suzon had disarmed her friends by telling openly of her engagement and what she meant to do about it, when the time had come, which was in fact not at all what Narcisse meant, nor what she did. Nar-

cisse would come to the white alder by the creek in the alpenglow and give the call of the burrowing owl, mellow and round, until Suzon came out to him to walk among the willows; then Narcisse would laugh and make love to her in a fashion that made it well for Suzon that she was a good girl at heart.

The shepherd lingered about Tres Pinos with his flock that year until the young sage was all eaten to the ground, and neighborhood gossips began to talk. It was, perhaps, of what they told him that Jules Moynier first vented his hate and vented it upon Suzon when Narcisse was gone.

"Herd dog," he named him. "Red Narcisse, was he called? Ugh! Red Wolf," thinking perhaps of the strong teeth in the red mouth. Such names and viler the girl had to hear, ending with this: "that he should keep away from decent girls or he would see what he would see."

"Nevertheless," said Suzon, "I mean to marry him."

"Psh!" said Jules Moynier.

The girl was not shaken, but Narcisse being out of the way—Suzon could still see his camp-fire glowing nightly on the spur of Pine Mountain—there was no more to be said about it at that time. When he came again in the Fall and Suzon told him of her father's outbreak, Narcisse laughed, stood in the store buying vermicelli and lentils and laughed, making open love to her, old Jules looking on sourly but not daring anything on account of trade, for Red Narcisse was a man esteemed by the herders and his word ran with power; moreover, there was a certain way he had of being both quick and hot in his temper when stopped of his laughing.

For another year Narcisse came and went at the two seasons, while his flock increased, the girl's beauty ripened, his desire grew upon him and the old man's hate cankered in his breast. Jules had asked himself the usual question concerning his daughter's marriage, and found that there was nothing in it for Jules. Suzon drew trade and was apt about the house. If there was no one

who could make such an omelet, equally there was no one to be found who would make it without pay. Jules rated her worth not at what she was, but at what it would cost to replace her. Narcisse also had prudence. It was reported that old Moynier had taken more dollars in his till than Narcisse had sheep in his flock; if he took the daughter without his blessing it would also be without dowry.

But when Suzon laid her pretty face against his sleeve and wept at her father's harshness he swore there should be no more of it. Suzon wept again and trembled greatly. Being a good girl, she wished to be married by a priest, the more so to win forgiveness for the sin of disobedience. Narcisse, who had no morals of his own, only a great good-nature, thought the more of her on that account, swore she should be married as she wished, would she but trust him. Ah, would she not! So he kissed her and brought her back to the window by which she had come out to him among the willows.

Narcisse had five months to plan how he should bring Suzon away from Tres Pinos and not neglect the flock, which, now it was to be charged with the expense of a family, must be the more carefully looked to. There was no priest to be come at nearer than Los Angeles, for the town Justice was not to be thought of on account of old Jules, and between Tres Pinos and any place where a runaway marriage could be properly consummated lay days' journeys of waste and sand, wind-blown dunes, valleys full of hot, dry haze. The railroad by which one came to olive and orchard lands and vainglorious cities skirted its southern border. Once the vacant hills between had been choked with mining life, swirling in as waters to a rain-fed spring, falling away as swiftly when the rain was past. Not without traces, though. High on the highest of the treeless hills the town of Tio Juan warped asunder in the staring sun. Its rows of unpainted wooden cabins with no power in that dry air to waste or rot, stood defenceless as they had been left by the swift eddy that

drew its people to other camps. Shingles curled away from unweathered roof-trees, doors warped from unrusted fastenings and revealed cheap furniture parting at its joints within. Rabbits ran in and out of the rooms and lean coyotes hunted them in the streets. After infrequent Winters of copious rains, when a web of radiant blossoms spread on all the rolling hills, Narcisse would swing his flock in a wide circle about Tio Juan and keep his camp there in the best of the desolate houses. His herders, to whom the place had a haunted look, preferred the open. It was, in reality, as safe as a fortress, isolated by desertness, seldom visited, passing into the traditions of the hills before its timbers rotted. It had but one approach, by a rift in the country rock, a knife-cut gorge down which a stream poured when there was water enough in that district to make a stream. The country rock was white, with reddish iron stains, dull, glistening white and dull, suggestive red. Wild grapes grew in the gorge, straight, eager stringers of the vines went up the white, wall-sided cliffs, and where the quartz rotted away from scarp and buttress the desert ravens made their nests. All hours they hung in the clear thin atmosphere, swung and tilted above Tio Juan.

The Winter during which Narcisse planned how he should run away with Moynier's pretty daughter was one of unusual rains. Winds drove them up from the California gulf and drifted them in from the coastward valleys; far and far inland they marked their dim, sweet trails with unaccustomed bloom. It was the rains and their promise of good pasture that put the thought of Tio Juan into Narcisse's mind. Then the lover's dream he had of sheep-bells sounding in the wilderness and Suzon beside him in the tender desert Spring, thrilled his big body with delight.

Of his herders, Narcisse trusted Jean Rieske most but not so much as Jean trusted him. Narcisse had lifted Rieske from an extremity of distress, and the fellow would have sooner

questioned Christ in Judgment than his master's plans. These were simple enough, and, but for the thought of the dowry which stuck in Narcisse's mind, would have gone very well. With the help of one other herder who might be hired for that purpose he could hold the flocks in the neighborhood of Tio Juan for a month, and having established camp there could bring the girl away from Tres Pinos unsuspected by Jules Moynier. Three days would take them to the priest and afterward there would be a Summer of roving in the high Sierras of the Snow, Suzon to ride in the supply wagon beside him as he followed his herders from camp to camp. Or perhaps he would make it up with the old man; for suppose Narcisse took it into his head to turn the French shepherds away from Moynier—and they hung together like their own sheep—what then would become of trade?

When on the trail Narcisse would send the flocks out flanking his course to the right and left, keeping as much as possible to the traveled road with the supply wagon, overtaking and passing from one to the other as need arose. This Spring, after he came through the Gap and touched the treeless hills, he put another man to the care of Jean's flock and took the herder in the wagon beside him. Only Jean knew what went into the supplies not common to a shepherd's use, and though Narcisse had not put his purpose to the proof of speech it must be supposed that he believed Jean Rieske was aware of much that lay at the back of his mind. Between men of simple and solitary habit there passes the same sort of wordless communication known to their sheep and dogs. In this order they left the Long Trail at Indian Wells and began to work across toward Tio Juan.

Wandering herders, who met Red Narcisse on the Long Trail that year, tried afterward to piece out of the memory of his behavior a warning of what was known to have occurred. They recalled that he clapped them jovially and laughed much, they believed sinis-

terly. Gossips of Tres Pinos, who feigned to remember in Suzon that Spring an index of her fortune, could only say that she went collectedly and with a sober countenance, which they conceived to be of dark intent. As for Jules, he took his accustomed way of interrogating life as to what it had in it for Jules. Narcisse made his secret camp for himself. What he told, what his herders guessed, what presage was abroad in the air breeding knowledge is known, as I have said, only to Jean Rieske's confessor.

It was in the clear and shadowless light of dawn when Narcisse Duplin set out for Tres Pinos and he rode all that day with a led horse beside him, and on into the dark when he had the twinkle of Suzon's light in the window to guide him. Suzon came out to him trembling, knowing his plan by letter, but needing to have it rehearsed and reassured. If she wavered, if an awakening of daughterly regard trembled in her heart, if a presage of the dark event weighed upon her, if the phrases of a better resolve rose upon her lips, one kiss of Red Narcisse's laid them low.

Having met and found all well they went back through the town for Suzon's small bundle. Narcisse laughed as he went; afterward when the night's work was known there were those who remembered how the laugh of Red Narcisse floated in the dark with the smell of the blossoming vines. The plan went well. Love and the night were all about them; old Jules slept on. But when Suzon had crept in by the window, Narcisse began to think of the old man's dollars; Suzon's dollars, in fact; for had she not earned them? Moynier was known to have a distrust of banks and thought to keep his coin by him.

Narcisse was drunk with the wine of excitement and the triumph of love, fevered with the pulse of adventure, and, lying in wait to do one questionable act, called upon himself, like buzzards to the quarry, the thought of faithless deeds. Suzon was gone too long. All Tres Pinos was asleep, but the Power that makes us aware of mischief to the

thing we love was awake and walking by the creek. In the interval when Narcisse awaited the girl at the bottom of the garden, it went and stood in the house of Jules Moynier; it passed him when his daughter left his roof, but when his money-box was threatened, returned and stood beside him. Old Jules awoke.

Although it was well on in the Spring and a scent of blossoming vines increasing with the night, Suzon, when she came with her bundle to the foot of the garden and her lover not at hand, stood and shivered by the willows until Narcisse came. It was dark under the vines where the horses wore upon the bit and the air smelled of crushed, pungent herbs. No sound reached from the village, yet they spoke softly; none stirred in the houses and no light shone, yet they moved fearfully.

"Mount," he said in some haste, and breathing hard. So they rode a little while in mid-stream and then on shifty sand, now in the traveled road and then in the open scrub stretching dimly toward Tio Juan. Love and the night had their way with them. The stars came out, the air was like balm and wine. Red Narcisse leaned from his saddle and kissed his sweetheart on the mouth. They talked little, the girl forgot her trembling. When she drowsed in the saddle Narcisse reached out a hand to her and the pulse beating where their palms met kept her awake. So they rode to Tio Juan.

If you wonder that I should be able to tell you this and yet not say clearly what Narcisse did to old Jules, it is not for anything Jean Rieske told me; rather that I know the road they took and have felt the earth pulse as it were a hand to clasp, and the softness of the desert Spring as it were a mouth to kiss; but no thought of mine can track Narcisse in the dreadful interval while poor Suzon waited and shivered at the foot of the garden.

When it was discovered that Jules Moynier lay in his house near death, with his money-box open and scattered coin upon the floor, the neighbors said, "Poor Suzon," and almost im-

mediately it was discovered that there was no Suzon. The old man lay on the bed as if he had risen from it and been thrust back; there were marks upon him but not so it could be said that rage and fright had not their part in his death, which appeared not so much a part of the robbery as incident to it. For a moment only he arrived at consciousness and spoke two words. "Narcisse Duplin," he said, and died. Then it was the neighbors recalled the laugh going by in the night, and so by many small hints and clues and at last by proper evidence it was laid at the door of Red Narcisse. Narcisse's door at that time was the door of a half-ruined house at Tio Juan known only to himself and Jean Rieske and to the regretful ravens that wheeled above the nesting cliffs.

Behind it sat Suzon, in what mind who shall say? But Narcisse was not there. He that should have been riding as a bridegroom to a priest was out with the herders turning the sheep away from the pleasant pastures about Tio Juan to remoter high plateaus, islanded by desertness, where no other shepherd ever came. He that was so tender of his flocks pushed them hard; he that laughed at losses fumed at the death of one poor ewe and turned aside to hide it in the rocks. If the herders knew anything of his plans they must have guessed that they had gone amiss, but for their part they were as used as the sheep to doing what they were told. Two days Narcisse gave to the disposition of his flock and to conferences with Jean. Suppose any occasion should arise that the flock should be followed, it would be hard to say from what unguessed hollow of the treeless hills their windless blur of dust should rise, and if the flock were found Narcisse would not be with them.

By this his haste and desire of hiding it is surmised that he was aware of the condition of Jules Moynier; it was even believed that he had arranged with Jean Rieske for the proper transfer of the sheep in case there should be a hue and cry and he be obliged to take Suzon out of the country. How much he told

the girl, what excuses he made for the delay, what she suffered in the two days he was about it, not even Jean Rieske knew; and since no one knew how much old Jules had in his box none knows what Narcisse carried away, nor what became of it. These matters being all disposed, Narcisse was going back to the secret camp with his heart set toward love and the wilderness. Neither he nor the herders noted the solitary Indian who crossed their track, and later, falling in by accident with the sheriff of Tres Pinos, gave him news of the road. Narcisse went afoot, twirling his stick and striding steadily in a midday drowse, so that it was with a shock of surprise that he came upon the sheriff riding upon the opposite side of a narrow gully, steep and full of rubble as is common to that country. In the shock of meeting there passed between the two men the instant knowledge on the one side of the errand that brought him there, on the other of the utter futility of law against the person of Narcisse the Red.

The officer rose in his stirrups calling out the formula of arrest, the shepherd on the moment turning aside into the rocks seeking cover and likely to find it, for not even the rabbits know the country about Tio Juan as the wandering sheep herders know it. The sheriff of Tres Pinos took a great while always to explain that he never meant to kill Duplin; that he felt it no part of his office to shoot at unconvicted men; that all he hoped to do was to frighten, or at the most to stop him with a bullet graze; that it was, in short, an act of Providence, and in no way to be laid to his account, in case there was a prospect of his reëlection, that Duplin should twist his foot upon a stone and, plunging sidewise, have met the bullet with his heart—to have fairly leaped into it, as one might say. And though it was sometimes suspected that the sheriff's prolixity was by the way of excusing himself, the fact was that Narcisse Duplin met his death in that way, and was picked up from the bottom of the gully a quarter of an hour later with his long red arms doubled

under him and a red froth on his mouth.

Not much search was made for Suzon. At Tres Pinos they had known her as a child and did not wish her back in that connection. Report spreading and gaining ground that a young woman had taken stage at Minton for the nearest railway point, it was guessed, and finally believed, that it was by that means she passed out of their lives.

Such pains had Narcisse taken to cover the traces of his sheep that it was nearly a month before Jean Rieske heard of his death and the place and manner of it. The news, so the other herders averred, seemed to deprive him of what little wit he had. As swiftly as possible and with a show of secretness he put back to Tio Juan. He pushed the flock furiously, and at last abandoned them, urged by they knew not what maggot in his brain, though he could have had no difficulty in steering a straight course and a short one, for the buzzards hung above it close and black, gathering and thickening as the fears in Jean Rieske's fumbling brain.

He knew, he must have known, by the true desert signs, what he should find before he came to the gateway of the white, glistening rocks, knew and had time for conning in his mind the common human fears of darkness and deserted places, the blank windows and the gaping doorways of the town, the maiden fears of desertion and betrayal, the un-

easy mind that went out in drear imaginings to the cause of such delay, the sallyings forth in hope and returnings in despair, the sickness, frenzies, madness that had come upon the girl before she had fallen or cast herself in the delirium of a disordered mind, on the red-stained battlements, much redder now, among the nests. Jean saw her dress fluttering between him and the sky as he came toiling up the gulch.

Whether or no there was any seal of silence on him other than the seal of his own elemental and faithful soul, he laid such a seal on the lips of Noé, whom he brought up to help him. Together they got her down and secretly buried her, but after Jean Rieske died Noé would tell fearfully in half hints and snatches to men of his own kind, what he knew, being helped to freer speech by the discovery, a year or two later, by some shepherds, of things that had been Suzon Moynier's, in a deserted house at Tio Juan. None of these matters ever came to the ears of the authorities. Jean Rieske fell into a melancholy madness not uncommon among men of solitary habit, and died unmolested by any other than the clamor of his own conscience for a priest, which being furnished, he made a good end. Therefore, though there is still talk on the Long Trail of a myth-making sort about Narcisse Duplin, the whole story of what happened at Tio Juan, if it be known to any, is known only to the confessor of Jean Rieske.



POSITIVE PROOF

PHRENOLOGICAL LECTURER—This man has no bumps on his head at all—he must be foolish.

WOMAN (from audience)—Sir! that is my husband!

"Ladies and gentlemen, you hear the verification of my diagnosis!"

MANHATTAN-TOWN

By Clinton Scollard

L OUD have I sung and long in praise
Of upland and of outland ways,
Of hills and hollows hung with haze,
And rill-pools pure;
Yet often through my dreaming steals,
Like the low whirl of many wheels,
An urban murmur that appeals
With siren lure.

So, thrilled and thrall'd, I leave behind
The meadow spaces unconfined,
The by-paths of the wandering wind
O'er dale and down,
And, girdled by the drowning din,
Forgetful of the lea and lin,
Become again a dweller in
Manhattan-Town.

I hark Trade's multitudinous jars,
The clanging to-and-fro of cars,
And mark how the eternal stars
Shine luster-pale;
An atom on the human tide,
I jostle, or am cast aside,
Reading, the while I stroll or stride,
Life's varied tale.

Faces!—how patently they show
The gamut's range, from joy to woe!
There's no emotion mortals know
One may not view
Amid Broadway's unceasing stress,
Along the Drive's bright breeziness,
Or where gay Fashion's footfalls press
The Avenue!

I haunt the wharves, the long, grim slips,
Where lie the great adventurer ships
That soon will dare the black eclipse
Of the lone seas;
Scraps of strange tongues about me float
From many a gruff or mellow throat;
Elbows I rub with the remote
Antipodes.

And sometimes from our tense today
 Into the long ago I stray
 Where Trinity stands dwarfed and gray,
 Or old Saint Paul's
 Broods 'mid its monuments, or where
 The Battery takes the fresh salt air,
 Or o'er some antiquated square
 The twilight falls.

Indubitably age presents
 A charm of subtle elements,
 But here modernity's intense
 And vital verve
 Grips us and girdles us until,
 For garnerings of good or ill,
 It grows a force from whose strong will
 We may not swerve.

The harbor shimmers broad and bright;
 The vast roofs glint with golden light;
 Beguilingly the streets invite
 Far up and down;
 Can you withstand the call? Not I!
 Out, then, beneath the gleaming sky!
 If *life* you crave, you've but to try
 Manhattan-Town.



A LIVELY PLACE

By Tom P. Morgan

“WELL, yes,” said the landlord of the Pruntytown tavern, “there is a good deal going on nowadays, here in the village. Our most prominent young gentleman elocutionist entertains the Reading Circle every Friday night with selections from Sut Lovengood’s works and Mrs. Sigourney’s poems; t’other day, a real light-haired member of the Y. M. C. A., who is also a valued assistant in Potter’s undertaking parlors, picked up a lady’s garter in front of the post office before he understood what it was, and has since been having sinking spells every time he thinks about the humiliating episode. We have just discovered that we have in our midst a young man who is so well off in this world’s goods that he can afford to travel clear over to Allegash to do his courting. Some of our most earnest church workers have sunk a deep shaft, by running the subject of infant baptism into the ground; and there is considerable talk going on about a man who is wearing his Sunday clothes every day while his wife is away on a visit. Yes, siree! old Pruntytown is pretty lively, just now!”

GENEROSITY DEFERRED

By Charles Battell Loomis

I WANT to say at the outset of this little story that I have nothing against millionaires. If a millionaire is a good man he is perfectly welcome to come and shake my hand. I also believe that a millionaire can be a gentleman. Many of them do not have time to be gentlemen, but there have been millionaires who were gentlemen first and millionaires afterward, and any of those may shake my hand at any time and I will not be offended. This story, however, is about a—well, I'll tell it without any further preliminaries.

It was in a Sunday school, and the children were mostly ten and up, and as bright as the average American child. The Sunday school superintendent was a tired-looking man of about fifty and he did not look as if the world had prospered him in a money way.

The man who had gone up on the platform to address the children was some twenty years the superintendent's junior and his clothes covered an individual who looked well in them. It was easy to see that Fortune and he were good friends.

He advanced to the centre of the platform with a pompous step and looked condescendingly at the young people before he spoke, and then he used a patronizing tone that made all the children who had any spunk wish they could throw something at him.

"My dear little children," said he; "twenty years ago, long before any of you little fellows began life's journey, there was a man in the dry-goods business in New York City. You all know where that is, don't you?"

Not an insulted child answered, and he went on:

"As I say, there was a man in New York City who engaged a boy to do office work. The man was doing business in a small way and he needed every minute of that boy's time. But the boy felt that his time was too valuable to give much of it to the merchant, so when he was sent to the bank or on other errands he would step into doorways and would study law, and the consequence was that at the end of a few months he had stolen—yes, my little children, he had stolen enough time to become an advanced law student, and of course that was very creditable to his brains. How many of these little children before me have brains?"

No answer.

"I hope some of you have. This boy certainly did have, but his employer discharged him because he was neglecting the dry-goods business. However, it made no difference to him, because in a short time he was admitted to the bar and soon had a lucrative practice. A lucrative practice means that he was soon able to command large sums of money for his services. Now, one night he awoke and suddenly became aware of his fault in stealing the time that belonged to his employer, and he said to himself, 'When I am making \$200,000 a year I will send my old employer a check for \$5,000, for I never would have become a lawyer if I had not studied in doorways while I was supposed to be working for him.'

"Little children, I see by your puzzled faces that you do not know who that dry-goods man was, but I can tell you. He was your honored superin-

tendent and he is still in the dry-goods business, and I am afraid that he is not doing any better than he did twenty years ago."

Here he paused and then said, "And now, children, who do you think stands before you?"

A bright boy of twelve raised his hand and said,

"You are the boy who stole your employer's time and you have come here today to give him a check for \$5,000."

The rich man looked very much pleased at the answer of the boy.

"My son," said he, "you are right and wrong, both. I am the boy who stole your dear superintendent's time, and I had hoped to do as I said I would and give your kind superintendent a \$5,000 check; but by the advice of my physician I am giving up my lucrative practice which only brought me in

\$199,000 last year, so I'll not be able to do myself the pleasure of making your superintendent happy.

"My only idea in telling you this was to show you what a boy can do with his time if he uses the spare minutes. And of course you all know that it is wrong to steal time that belongs to others.

"In conclusion, I wish your kind superintendent well, and I hope all you little tots will grow up to be as successful as I am and will have as kind employers as your superintendent was. I owe my success to him."

This beautiful story teaches us that there are many men in this world who are perfectly willing to be generous next week. If any millionaire who reads these lines will dive down into his pocket and do something *now* for the man who contributed to his success, and will then come to me, he may shake my hand with pleasure.

HER INGRATITUDE

By Madeline Bridges

SHE sketched and painted, up and down the river.
 I rowed the boat
 Where willows dip, and deepening shadows quiver,
 And lilies float.
 Cliff, cottage, sail, and bridge, and sea-sands yellow
 Her studies were—
 And, oh, I thought myself a lucky fellow
 Adrift—with her!

Long hours, with oars at rest, I sat and waited;
 She painted on,
 With now and then a smile—absorbed, elated—
 Till, daylight gone,
 She'd raise her eyes reluctantly, and murmur,
 "Oh, *must* we go?"
 And I—I'd only plant my feet the firmer,
 And start to row.

Last night we met. Of art, she prattled sweetly
 Of what she'd done
 In way of Summer work, accomplished neatly,
 Of praises won;
 But, when I shyly dared my part to mention
 As oarsman true,
 She vaguely smiled, and said, with inattention—
 "Oh—was it *you*?"

THE VIOLIN

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

THE quality—or, more accurately, the gathering of qualities—which most attracted Margaret to John Ewing, was his all-around evenness, his complete sanity of mind and body. She herself was a matter-of-fact young person, who had known a good many men in the course of her twenty-seven years, and experience had taught her to eschew brilliance in the masculine gender, when that brilliance was obtained at the expense of Monday-to-Monday virtues. She could never have married for common sense, money and position solely, but when those advantages offered themselves combined with a personality sufficiently forceful and lovable to appeal moderately to her sense of romance, she did not hesitate long.

Ewing had a satisfying present and an alluring future; Margaret's friends, upon her acceptance of him, arose and called her blessed, and she, though knowing that she could never feel for him that blend of worship, passion and protective mother-love which she had seen and vaguely understood in some of her friends who had married the men they loved, concurred in the popular verdict. If she could never rise through Ewing's agency to the sheerest heights of human bliss, certainly she would never be forced by him to go down into the valleys of disgust, despondency and despair. He was strong, tactful, above all, *sane*; in their relations there would be nothing strange, or low, or shameful—no mental or moral excrescence to be struggled with and prayed over and hidden from the common gaze. Their life together, she was sure, would be fine and well-ordered, and she left her fa-

ther's house without a qualm, confident of a future flowing along definite lines to a splendid goal.

After an extended honeymoon, the Ewings took up their residence for the Winter in the N-street house, not far from Dupont Circle, which Ewing had purchased shortly after his appointment to the Cabinet. His fortune, acquired in the course of a moderately long and exceedingly lucrative legal practice, was large enough to warrant the purchase, and the purchase itself had been a prophetic symbol of his permanence in national politics; he had little doubt that Washington would be his home for many years to come. Margaret liked the house, and liked still more the prospect of entertaining in it, for the social instinct was strong in her. When he showed her through it, on the day of their arrival, she rejoiced in the arrangement and decorations; John's taste in such matters, as in others, was well-nigh perfect.

"Of course," he said, glancing at her with his easy, well-bred smile, "you have *carte blanche* to make such changes as you wish. I have made none, thinking that you would prefer to give your own orders. I dare say there are a great many things that should be altered to suit the feminine taste. There has been no woman's hand in evidence here since the days of the wife of the Western senator from whom I bought the house, and fortunately I've succeeded in obliterating nearly all traces of her. Your own rooms, however, were done over in accordance with the directions you gave me."

"Yes," answered Margaret, vaguely. "Yes. You are very good." A phrase

of his speech had struck her queerly. "No woman's hand." What, then, of his first wife? Groping for dates, she remembered that the first Mrs. Ewing had been dead nearly fifteen years, and so could never have even seen the Washington house, which had not been built much more than ten. She was conscious of her own absurdity, and spoke again quickly to cover it. "I don't think there's much to be changed," she said. "A few minor details, perhaps. In general, everything is wonderfully nice, and even if it were not, we should scarcely find it convenient to hire an apartment while extensive changes were going on. Shifts in habitat are bad for a man's work, I've been told." She smiled at him brightly. "By the way, where do you do most of your work? You haven't shown me your private quarters yet."

There was no deepening of amusement in his eyes; he always accorded her the consideration due to an equal. "Practically all the real work done in the Capitol of our glorious country," he explained, "is accomplished in offices and in the sub-cellars dignified in the public prints under the name of committee-rooms. But if you want to see where I go in order to be alone, I'll show you. Follow me closely, and be careful not to stumble; the passage is rather dark."

He led her back through several of the rooms which she had already seen and opened a door leading, as she judged, toward the small vine-covered "L" structure partly visible, through the porte-cochère, from the street. The ensuing passageway was unlighted, and she followed blindly at his heels, waiting in almost complete darkness, while he used a key with fingers accustomed by habit.

The room into which he ushered her was not large, and was made to seem smaller by the mass of books and papers which littered it in apparently utter confusion. There was but a single window, through which the afternoon light streamed down upon a shabby writing-table that, with its accompanying swivel-chair,

formed the sum total of furniture. Around the base-boards, and even in the middle of the floor, were pile after pile of odd volumes, pamphlets and written sheets, heaped together without method. Commingled odors of dust and tobacco smoke permeated the place, and Ewing hastily flung open the window, turning apologetically to Margaret.

"The servants have orders never to enter this room," he said. "I suppose there is nothing here that they might not see, but it was a fancy of mine to have one room of my house where I could be absolutely alone in my glory—or my distress. In fact, you are the only person, except myself, who has been beyond the threshold in years. The place shows the marks of the beast, doesn't it?"

Margaret laughed. "It's something of a revelation," she admitted. "I had no idea you could be so disorderly. Perhaps it's a relief to detect a human frailty in you. At any rate, I appreciate the compliment of admission to the *sanctum sanctorum*, and I'll promise not to push the privilege to the length of invasion with a broom. But, John, how very strange! I thought you detested music. What is that violin doing here?"

He wheeled abruptly, following her gaze toward the opposite wall, where hung the instrument which had attracted her attention.

It was an old violin, suspended uncovered, with its bow, from a nail driven in the plaster. A shade of annoyance crossed Ewing's face.

"I do detest music," he said. With an obvious effort, he returned to his former lightness of tone. "It's another weakness of mine; you'll find lots of them as we go along. As for the violin, it was given me by a—a friend, a friend who has been dead a long time. I never touch it, but have left it there through sheer laziness, as I leave many other things. For example, here is a volume of Voltaire that has been lying untouched in this corner for two or three years." And he picked up a book from the floor, opening and

shutting it vigorously, to expel the dusty deposit of months.

Margaret followed his lead; she was not one to probe the past unnecessarily. "Heavens, what a cloud!" she exclaimed. "Come, let's leave Voltaire to his fate; the whole room smells, with him, of antiquity."

Ewing laughed, laid down the volume, and moved to close the window. "I quite agree with you," he said, "and I doubt whether the Frenchman, if his opinion could be obtained, would enter a protest; he was a philosopher in the flesh, and probably would not care to cavil at so trifling an affront to his spirit. Nevertheless, he was a vain man, so perhaps it's just as well for our peace of mind that we can't get his views. Vanity, they say, outlives every other emotion."

"And love?" asked Margaret.

"Love," he replied, "admits no argument. We are told by poets that love is deathless, and such a belief is one that you and I ought certainly to share. In some ways, poets are the truest philosophers, being, by their very nature, no philosophers at all. So your question, like all others, my dear, leads ultimately to a paradox." Smiling tenderly, he waited for her to precede him from the room.

Several months elapsed before Margaret had occasion to think again of the violin—months filled with pleasure and profit to herself and to John. She was eminently fitted to fill and enjoy the position of a diplomatic hostess, and Ewing, evidently, took pride in her success. Their personal life together, too, proved all that her fancy had painted it; Ewing was attentive, considerate, satisfying, and, chiefly as a result of his constant tact, there was a minimum of that mental clash which must always follow the conjunction of two lives. The only thing which grew really to worry Margaret, as time went on, was her husband's propensity for over-work. Frequently, when there was no obvious necessity for extra application, he would make his excuses at a comparatively early

hour in the evening, and shut himself up in the little room at the end of the dark passage until two or three o'clock in the morning. On these occasions he always reappeared promptly at breakfast-time, and went to his routine work in a cheerful mood, but with a white, tired face that told of mental stress. Margaret asked no questions, and in truth attached little importance to the habit; nevertheless, she worried a trifle, occasionally, and was in a condition ripe for excitement when the violin obtruded itself once more, and this time in a startling manner, upon her notice.

One January night, when Ewing had withdrawn according to this growing custom, she awoke through dreams to a half-consciousness of music. Lying in the unreal borderland between waking and sleeping, she seemed to be listening to the strains of a violin, sweetest and saddest of the soul's mediums of expression, played upon by one cognizant of all the sorrow and the beauty of the world. So wild and haunting, and withal so wonderfully entrancing was the melody that she hesitated to arouse her senses fully, and for some moments allowed her half-awakened mind to drift, upborne by the music. Fearful of breaking the spell, she lay motionless, and when the eerie strains ceased abruptly at the exact instant of her mind's automatic reassumption of complete consciousness, she felt both regret and amusement—regret, that the beautiful and uncanny music had stopped, and amusement, because she had let herself be cheated into thinking it real. Despite the latter feeling, however, the impression left by the experience was powerful enough to make her restless; ridicule it as she would, the notion grew in her brain that the music had been not dreamed, but heard.

Again and again she told herself that she was absurd, and strove to put the idea from her, but her thoughts, returning to their trend with the maddening insistence induced by loneliness and the dark watches of the night, magnified the fancy to an illogical degree.

Tossing between the hot sheets, she remembered suddenly the old violin which she had seen hanging against the wall of the little room downstairs. Could it be possible that John had been playing upon that violin—that he had lied to her about his hatred of music? In broad daylight, or indeed at any other time than this, she would have laughed the thought to scorn; now, in the midnight stillness, with the memory of that strange melody strong upon her, she gradually admitted it to the realm of likelihood, and dwelt upon it until reason was lost in a tangle of morbid imagination.

At last she arose, turned on the electric lights, and slipped a wrapper over her nightdress. Opening softly the door which separated her bedroom from Ewing's, she saw that, as she had supposed, his bed had not been used during the night. Without hesitation she passed through his room, out into the chilly hall and down the broad front stairs, which felt unnaturally hard and cold to her slippered feet.

There is a strangeness in walking by night through even the most familiar of houses. To Margaret, overwrought and unaccustomed to the intricacies of her husband's dwelling, the dark rooms behind the gaping doorways seemed pregnant with vague horrors, and in the dim outlines of furniture she discerned shapes of half-imagined things starting into motion toward her. With difficulty she restrained the childish impulse to press the buttons which would set the entire lower floor ablaze with lights, and it was only by dint of flogging her common-sense that she accomplished the journey to the passage without, as she tersely termed it in her self-communion, "making a fool of herself."

Standing in the black, stuffy passage-way, she called Ewing's name softly. There was no answer, but from the room behind the last door a sound of labored breathing reached her preternaturally acute perception. For an instant, her heart stopped in its beat; then, with an unspoken prayer that the door might not be locked, she laid her

hand upon the knob, which answered her pressure.

Ewing was seated in the swivel-chair, with head and shoulders resting upon the table, as though thrown forward by a convulsion. His head lay between his outstretched arms, but the face, drawn and putty-colored, was turned toward the door, and the eyes were open. As Margaret entered, there was a jerking of the back and neck muscles, and the pallid, laboring lips voiced a single word, almost inaudibly.

"Estrella!" he breathed. Then the head rolled back, and the eyes closed.

Before Margaret could do more than raise him, however, his will asserted itself, and he spoke again, with some degree of coherence.

"It's my heart!" he gasped. "Call no-one. I've had it before—all right in a minute. Ought to have told you. Brandy—in—the drawer."

He rallied with remarkable quickness by the aid of the stimulant, and in the course of fifteen minutes was able to stand, though weakly. He steadfastly refused to let Margaret summon help, and insisted that he could get to his bed with no other aid than the support of her shoulder.

"I am a strong man," he said, between his teeth, "and this has happened before. It will pass in a short time." For an instant, he turned his bloodshot eyes on her with tortured intensity, while the difficult breath hissed in his distended nostrils. "I charge you, say nothing of this—or of anything you may have heard."

"I shall say nothing," she heard herself assure him, dully. "There is no need for melodrama. Lean on me, and save your strength for the stairs."

As she paused in the doorway, with his grip biting into her shoulder, it seemed to her backward gaze that the bow, hanging beside the violin against the wall, still swayed, as though but recently relinquished by some unseen hand.

Early the next afternoon, Margaret made a call upon Helen Pratt, Ewing's only sister. She was cheerfully received by the latter in an untidy sewing-

room. The olive branches of the tree of Pratt were six in number, ranging from Henry, of boarding-school age, to Muriel, a toddler of three, and their mother wrought diligently by day in order that the salary and perquisites of Pratt, who was Washington correspondent for a Chicago paper, might not be unnecessarily depleted by clothing bills. Mrs. Pratt was a small, blond woman, superficially unlike her brother except in the set of her chin, but gifted like him with an acute mind. After the amenities had been satisfied, she regarded her sister-in-law somewhat narrowly.

"My dear," said she, "you look jaded. Is anything the matter? I don't believe in bottling up troubles which might be the better for a little air. You mustn't catch the habit from John; he's unduly secretive, in some ways."

"There's nothing the matter," Margaret answered. "I only want a little information, and I suppose you'll think the subject a queer one. I want you to tell me something of John's first wife."

Mrs. Pratt's pale eyebrows went up a trifle. "You have me at the mercy of my own petard," she said, after a moment's consideration. "I'm afraid that in this particular case I shall have to keep the cork in. There's no profit in exhuming a past which is dead and buried, and the process is always unpleasant."

"If you don't tell me," Margaret observed calmly, "someone else will. I shouldn't have asked unless I had really wanted to know, and you were the logical source to tap, since I could scarcely ask John."

The other basted to the end of a seam in silence. "I suppose you are right," she admitted, then. She really liked Margaret, and was not unwilling to accord her intimacy. "What is it that you wish to find out, and how much do you already know?"

"I know nothing, except that her name was Estrella, and that she died some fifteen years ago. But I have heard that the marriage was unhappy, and I want to know as much of the story as you can tell me, without dis-

loyalty to John. Believe me, it's not mere curiosity that makes me ask."

"No," returned Mrs. Pratt, "I have never found you curious." She laid down the garment upon which she was working, and clasped her hands across her knee in a way that reminded Margaret of Ewing. "Well, I'll tell you. There's nothing in the story that you oughtn't to know, though a part of it is rather sad—perhaps all of it. You see, John was barely twenty-one when he married, while Estrella—queer name, isn't it? She hated it like poison—Estrella was at least six or seven years older. Such affairs nearly always turn out unhappily."

"Was she beautiful?" Margaret asked rather sharply.

"No. She was thin, and dark, and very plain. And she had a clubfoot."

"Oh!" exclaimed the second wife. Remembering Ewing's constant demand for grace and beauty in everything around him, she felt a sudden pang of pity for the dark, thin, crippled woman. "Poor thing! Poor thing!"

"She was the daughter of a professor at Ware, where John went to college," Mrs. Pratt continued. "Her father was a human fossil, and the mother died when the girl was a baby; consequently Estrella grew up pretty much as she liked. She was a silent child, I believe, with a morbid shrinking, such as deformed children usually develop, unless they are carefully helped and tended." She paused for a moment, and looked out of the window; one of her own children had been stricken, in babyhood, with hip-disease. Margaret waited patiently for the resumption of the story—a resumption of which the first sentence struck her like a hammer.

"Estrella's only intimate friend, as a child, was her violin," said Mrs. Pratt, unconscious of the impression of the words upon her listener. "She had a natural aptitude for music, and her father, probably through indifference, allowed her as much instruction as she cared for. I've heard that she could play the most difficult pieces at fourteen, but her technique never seemed to me half so wonderful as her expres-

sion. She could make her instrument voice her mood better than any other musician I've ever heard—and I've listened to Ysaye and Kreisler and lots of others. She was unhappy and didn't know why, and put her sorrow and restlessness into her playing—you know what I mean.

"That was before she met John. Afterward, I suppose she knew quite well why she was unhappy.

"John, at the time, was a great, raw-boned boy, slow to mature in mind, as in body. He was frightfully wild in college, and my father used to sit up o' nights, worrying over the reports that came from Ware. He was a hard man, my father, and couldn't see why John should be so foolish at twenty as he himself had been at twenty-five. So he sent savage letters, and cut down John's allowance—which only made the boy stubborn. Things went from bad to worse, and finally culminated in John's expulsion from Ware in disgrace. The next thing we heard was that he was married to a woman several years older than himself, and had gone West; that was the last straw, and my father cut him off in a burst of anger that endured, intermittently, for many years.

"You'll think this a fragmentary sort of story, I'm afraid, but I'm giving you the facts as they occur to me. I never was much of a raconteur, and I haven't thought of these things, short of necessity, for a long time.

"If you ask me how Estrella caught my brother, I can't tell you, though I'm certain in my own mind that she practically hypnotized him by her playing. He was always tremendously susceptible to the influence of music, and probably didn't care very much what he did just then. In any case, they both paid bitterly for their folly, for John certainly didn't love her as a man should love his wife, and she loved him too much to be ignorant of the fact that he didn't. Yet, after all, I believe that she was happy, in her way. They had an awfully hard time, with no money, and, at the first, no friends; but he was kind to her, and she believed in him to the point of mania. She resented what

she called his wrongs, and even in later years, the fire would jump to her eyes when anyone mentioned Ware. 'They'll see him as I see him, some day,' she'd say. 'And I'll be there to watch them, when they do. He's a great man, and the world shall see how great he is. But he's mine, and no one can take him from me.' Then she'd cuddle her violin under her cheek, and draw through it such a wild Northern song that you could hear the wind rush over the water, and see the old Norsemen go out to battle in their long ships. I'm not an impulsive or poetic person, but I wanted to get up and hit someone when she played like that. And when she was sure of the effect of her playing, she'd break off with a crash in the middle of a bar, and laugh, and say, with a grate in her voice: 'I'm not much to look at, but I can make people do what I want. My soul isn't clubfooted.'

"It was true enough that she could make people do what she wanted—or at least, some people; for her heart was set on John's success, and she drove him to work night and day. He was like a somnambulist when she played to him, and seemed to follow the bidding of the music blindly. They lived the first couple of years in an attic room, and she cooked his food and mended his clothes while he studied law; and in the daytime, while he clerked it in a grocery shop for a living, she picked up a few extra dollars by giving lessons on the violin to people she loathed and despised. Whenever the load got too heavy she could lift it with that wonderful music of hers, and she could rouse John to effort or make him forget his troubles almost at will. I suppose she made a man of him in the process.

"There you have the brighter side. The dark times came when her own moods got the better of her, and later, when she realized that the hardest part of the work was over, and John had not so much need of her. Then she would make the violin shriek like a wounded thing, or moan uncannily, so that one thought of were-wolves and men hunted down the wind by hounds, and the ghosts of people buried

alive. She was horribly jealous, too, and used to watch John as a cat watches a mouse, for fear that he would pay a moment's attention to a younger and prettier woman. Her jealousy increased as time went on, until at last it became an obsession, and the scenes she made because of it were of almost weekly occurrence. She became continuously morose—at the last nearly unbearable. Perhaps, toward the very end, she was a little mad."

"And what was the end?" asked Margaret, after a moment, as Mrs. Pratt did not seem inclined to continue.

"She died in childbed," was the answer. "Poor Estrella! She didn't want the baby, but it came, and coming still-born, killed her—fortunately for them both, I suppose, though it seems wicked to say so. Her death was very terrible; she fought with all her strength, and claimed John with her dying breath. She was buried at dusk, in the old Ware graveyard, and John's love of music went into the grave with her. He has never been able to endure the sound of a violin since she died. It's a sad story, isn't it? I don't know that I ought to have told it to you, after all."

"I practically forced you to tell it," returned Margaret, with a coldness that struck Ewing's sister as unsympathetic. "Just one more question: Has John ever been able to play the violin himself?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Pratt, in evident surprise. "So far as production is concerned, he scarcely knows one note from another."

In Margaret's brain, as she drove homeward, there took a definite idea which, twenty-four hours before, she would have considered fantastic to the point of insanity; and the idea was that the dead woman had arisen to play to John Ewing upon the violin which had been hers in life. Try as she might, she could not rid herself of this notion, and when, a week later, there was a recurrence of the musical phenomenon, she listened with a sick, unreasoning dread akin to the terror of the child afraid of ghosts in the dark.

This time, she was awake when the music began. It commenced softly, and seemed far distant, like a sound borne faintly down the wind through space, so that, had she been hearing it for the first time, she could scarcely have sworn that it was not a fantasy of her own imagination. While she listened, she felt her flesh crawl, for though fright made her incapable of analysis, she became aware, as the sounds proceeded, that the player, whoever or whatever he, she, or it might be, was calling insistently to the listener—was no longer playing a beautiful but random air, but rather urging, nay, demanding, the performance of a service or the fulfillment of some vow. Ever higher rose the music, more weird and more unearthly, until, just as the final chords were trembling on the air, Margaret, who had disbelieved in the occult all her life, and denied even the undue sway of human melody, swooned dead away in her bed.

She was long in returning to consciousness; when she did so, she heard Ewing ascending the stairs step by step, slowly, painfully, like one walking under a heavy burden.

During the days which followed, she labored desperately against the gathering horror. In the morning, when everything around her was bright and cheerful, when Ewing, strong of thought and arm, was at hand, and the evidences of happiness and prosperity were constantly with her, it seemed that the thoughts of the previous night were mere dreams, figments of folly, and she mocked herself for giving them attention. To believe such a thing in connection with a man like her husband appeared a madness. Yet, so surely as twilight drew down, she found herself stricken with a dread which she tried to make nameless, but which always resolved itself, as the hours passed, into a definite fear of hearing the strains of the ghostly violinist—a fear not doomed to disappointment. Seven times, between January and the end of June, she heard the music, and each time, until the

last, the call of the musician seemed more earnest, more wildly compelling.

Upon Ewing, the experience—if experience there really was—left little evident result. In Margaret's presence, he was as loving and attentive as before. She knew, too, that he did his work with systematic accuracy and success; she was often told that his future would be brilliant. There was almost nothing, in the cold light of reason, to support her suspicions; nevertheless, the suspicions grew, as she noted, beneath her husband's impassive, every-day demeanor, the signs of secret distress—the sudden starts, the occasional pallor, the nervous twitching of the hands at times when he thought himself unnoticed. She was forbidden by his express command to probe the subject, and furthermore, she was not of those women who are enabled by love to break through the wall of reserve with which the strong man walls himself about. Therefore, since there was no outlet for her fears, they festered, and ever the idea grew of the dead woman playing from beyond the grave to the man she loved, calling on him to do her bidding as he had done it in life. What was it that she wanted?

After the heavy work of the Winter session was over, Margaret tried to induce Ewing to leave Washington and go to some more quiet place for a rest. By then, her anxiety had mounted to an unreasoning horror of the Washington house and all that it contained, and her overwhelming desire was to get away from it. Ewing gave no reason for his refusal, but was persistent in it; they stayed in the Capital through the Spring, and on into late May, when nearly everyone else of their immediate circle had left the city for a less oppressive climate. Gradually, in the face of these conditions, Margaret sank into a dull apathy, enlivened only by her hidden dread of the violin. She never fell asleep without the expectation of being awakened in the stillness of the small hours by that uncanny music, and even by day it seemed that the dead woman's shadow fell between her and her hus-

band. Often she reviewed the facts of the story as Ewing's sister had told it, dwelling upon each digression and quotation, so that she was scarcely surprised when Ewing showed her, one morning, a letter from the college authorities at Ware that seemed but a fulfillment of Estrella's prophecy.

"They want to give me an honorary degree," he said. "It's rather a shift from their attitude when I was a student. At that time, they didn't want to give me any degree at all."

"Shall you take it?" Margaret asked. "The trip will be a hard one." The horror was heavy on her; Estrella had been buried at Ware.

"I shall take it," he answered. There was a strange light in his eyes. "It will be a satisfaction to me, and I owe it to—to my past," he concluded lamely.

Of the journey north, and of their reception at Ware, Margaret had only a confused remembrance in after years. Queerly enough, she remembered with most distinctness trifling sights and occurrences—the stifling heat of the train, a yelling baby in the sleeper, the red and bulbous nose of one of the officials who kowtowed to Ewing on the station platform at Ware. In the same way, now vaguely, now with photographic accuracy, she could recall the details of their entertainment at the home of President Blair, and of the gala Commencement festivities at the great University—festivities of which she was a part, walking in the van beside her distinguished husband. At the time, she seemed to act easily and without her own volition, like a puppet moved by strings, going through the various functions of the occasion with appropriate gestures, until she found herself seated, as if by magic, in a proscenium box of the auditorium in which was held the ceremony of conferring honorary degrees on certain men of prominence in letters, science and public life.

The scene upon the stage was in its way brilliant and impressive. Many men, famous in their respective lines of work, were gathered there, most of

them arrayed, after the Continental fashion, in black gowns with hoods of various colors, denoting degrees of academic dignity. The ceremony was one of pomp and circumstance; if, to the lay mind, there was in it an element of the ridiculous, that element did not appeal to the audience, most of the members of which had been drawn to the auditorium by personal interest. The ladies in the box with Margaret buzzed with enthusiasm, and the main body of the assembly was equally appreciative. She herself appeared to be the only spectator unmoved by the general joyous excitement.

As she sat idly casting her glance over the house, Mrs. Blair, the wife of the president, leaned close to her shoulder, and asked in a low tone:

"Do you know where Mr. Ewing is? He doesn't seem to be on the stage, and a message has just come from my husband, asking about him."

Margaret shrugged slightly. "I've no idea where he is," she answered. "I had supposed that he was with President Blair."

The president's wife stared at her in surprise; she was naturally unaware that, at the moment of her question, there had sounded in her guest's ears the preliminary beat of an air never played by human orchestra. Sitting tense in her chair, Margaret listened for the last time to the music of the violin, while around her the people talked in whispers, and on the stage before her the proceedings had actually commenced. For many weeks she had been awaiting that air with terror, and at last it had come—no longer the wild, sweet, haunting call of a forsaken spirit, but a triumphant pæan of victory, so high and clear that though she knew its meaning could be plain to her and one other alone, she trembled lest the whole world might hear it.

The playing was not long, and ended abruptly in a crash, as of rending strings. As it did so, Mrs. Blair again leaned toward Margaret.

"My dear Mrs. Ewing, you are not well," she said, urgently. "You're as white as a sheet, and I fear something is wrong. Your husband's secretary is at

the door, saying that Mr. Ewing cannot be found. I'm sure he will turn up in due time, but really, something must be done to hurry him. Won't you help us, and let us help you?"

Margaret rose with perfect composure. "Please don't worry," she said. "I will find him. Where is Johnson?"

The secretary, very much flustered, was within call. Margaret did not allow him to voice his tumult.

"Find a carriage," she commanded, "and come with me."

He looked at her queerly, but obeyed without question. When the carriage was secured, she gave one more order.

"Tell him to drive to the cemetery," she said, and took her seat, so that there was nothing for the perplexed and frightened secretary to do but follow.

The drive was not long to the old graveyard. During it, Margaret said nothing at all, and Johnson, whatever he may have thought, forbore to question her. At the gate, she curtly ordered the driver to wait, and rang the bell which, as the printed notice above it stated, would summon the caretaker by day or night.

A tall fence of iron pickets surrounds the cemetery at Ware, and the gateway is marked by four sandstone columns of monumental proportions, topped by a frieze bearing an inscription. Margaret, standing before this gate in her filmy evening gown, looked up through the glare of the electric light on the opposite corner, and laughed, for the inscription read:

THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED

When the steps of the caretaker sounded on the flagged walk beyond the gate, she turned to Johnson.

"It reminds one of the porter scene in 'Macbeth,' doesn't it?" she said lightly.

After a question or two, she passed through the barred gate and, followed by the men, walked unhesitatingly down one of the cemetery paths. Where she stopped, they found the body of John Ewing, stretched, cold in death, above the grave of his first wife. Beneath him, broken by the fall, was a violin.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

By Anne Warner

IT was an amateur studio, very pretty and effective with papier-mâché shields and spears in profusion and a particularly poor light exposure. The lady who owned it, and who bore upon her black-edged calling cards the name "Mrs. Lindley," was the prettiest and most effective thing about it, and if her artistic instincts ran to bogus armor and knew no aversion to a southern reflection across her canvas, no one ever laid it up against her. She was too adorably dainty and delightful for even a Bouguereau to have scolded, and when she drew three nymphs and had their hair blown by three different breezes none of her visitors ever thought of calling her attention to the fact.

"Don't you think it's funny," she said one day to Rex Lindley, her deceased husband's cousin, when that gentleman had strolled in to mention a theatrical first night for which he had tickets, "don't you think it's funny—a gypsy read my character out of my hand yesterday and never said a thing about my being an artist!"

"That is odd," said Rex, who had a sense of humor but never discharged it at his ingenuous little relative-at-law. "What did she tell you?"

Mrs. Lindley took a sketch-block and two pencils and sought a seat somewhat aloof from her caller.

"I'm going to draw your head while we talk," she remarked parenthetically. "You won't mind being drawn again, will you? You see you're so good-looking, and then, too, you keep so still."

Rex laughed; she looked so dear and

childlike, waiting for his permission, with her pencil's tip in her mouth.

"You don't mind?" she questioned again.

"No, of course not. But what else did the gypsy tell you?"

Mrs. Lindley twisted up her eyebrows and gazed hard on the subject and then on the sketch-block.

"Oh," she said, "she talked just the usual light woman and dark man and said I'd be married within a year. I—" her words died away; all her soul was absorbed in the outline on the sketch-block.

"So you do not expect to be married within a year?"

"Rex! The idea! You know I'm never going to marry again. I'm going to live for Art. But that reminds me"—she ceased drawing suddenly—"what do you think? I've had a proposal!"

Lindley started slightly.

"A proposal!"

"Yes; a real one. I never had thought of such a thing. You know I'm not the kind that thinks every man that is nice to me is nice just for love. Why, if I thought *that*—" she went on sketching with an expressive shrug.

He considered it best to keep still.

"I mustn't tell you who it was—must I? But he felt so badly that I cried afterwards—honestly I did."

"Then you refused him?"

"Why, of course. Don't speak for a minute—I'm doing your mouth. You have such a nice mouth; *he* had a mustache. I fancy that was one reason why I refused him. I don't like mustaches."

She held the sketch-block off and frowned thoughtfully at it—then shook her head gloomily.

"It doesn't look a bit like you, Rex, not a bit. Oh, dear, I *do* wish my sketches would look like people."

"But they *do*," said Lindley hurriedly, "I have that one of Camp hung up in my room and everyone knows it's he."

"That's because of the way he shows his teeth when he smiles; he was smiling when I drew him. But he didn't smile much when I refused—oh!" she caught her breath, blushing madly.

"Never mind," said Lindley kindly, "I won't tell."

She looked so conscience-stricken that he laughed aloud.

"Get your hat and let us walk a bit," he proposed; "you'll feel better then. Mind what I say."

So they went out to walk.

It was quite two months later that, coming to take her out to dine, he found her sobbing on the sofa.

"I've had—to—to refuse a—another man," she confessed between chokes.

He dragged a chair close to her side and took the hand that was not wielding a pocket-handkerchief into both his own.

"My poor child," he said pityingly.

"Oh, it was awful—it was Mr. Liggett!"

Lindley bit his lip hurriedly at the unconscious hyphen between her phrases. "But didn't you suspect?" he hazarded mildly.

"No, how could I? He's taken me to drive—and I've enjoyed it, but so many men take me to drive and I always enjoy it—and now, oh—oh—oh!"

Lindley held her hand in silence.

After a while she wiped her eyes and looked up.

"How *could* I marry Mr. Liggett?" she propounded. "Fancy his kissing me! Fancy his holding my hand! Why, Rex, when you hold my hand it's a real comfort, but the mere idea of Mr. Liggett's holding my hand rubs my backbone all the wrong way!"

"I'm glad you decided against him, then!"

"Yes"—she rose from the sofa—"I am, too. But I *wish* they wouldn't do it—it makes me feel so badly. I sha'n't enjoy myself half as much as usual tonight."

"That will be a pity." He was bringing her cloak.

"Yes; because I always have such a good time with you. I'll never marry any man unless I have just as good a time with him as I do with you."

"Thank you, dear. That's a great compliment."

She smiled sweetly.

"But it's true, Rex," she said, nodding additional emphasis to her statement; "come—let's go."

And again they went out.

Spring came next, with its usual Locksley Hall effect on all things masculine.

Lindley—going to see his cousin-in-law—found her in great distress—and all in white (for the first time).

"Just think," she said, her underlip trembling, "I've worn black three whole years and I've so looked forward to getting out of it and now—here—the first day—" she broke down abruptly.

"Was it Atherton?" Rex asked.

She nodded. "Yes, and I didn't know *what* to say to him because he hasn't any mustache and he really is splendid and—and—oh, I don't know"—her voice trembled and then she added in a whisper, "You know with all my practice the sketches don't look like the people yet, either!"

Lindley didn't smile; instead he divined. "You mean Art isn't proving entirely soul-filling?" he said.

She nodded.

"And I'm getting awfully blue, too," she confessed. "Some days I wish I was dead—truly I do."

"Wouldn't Atherton have helped?"

She shook her head. "No," she sighed.

They were sitting—not in the studio—but in her little drawing-room below; she was occupying a large easy-chair of the satin-tufted variety—the sort that have wide, broad arms. Lindley left his

seat and went and sat on one of the wide, broad arms. She leaned back and looked up at him.

"Be comforting," she said. "Say something nice to cheer me up—something about my drawing—or my eyes."

"Which shall I praise first?" he asked. "You know that I think they are both wonderful." (He saved his reputation for truthfulness by looking into "both" as he spoke).

She smiled. "Oh, tell me about my eyes first," she said, her womanliness worsting her art without even a battle.

"Ah," said Rex, still looking down, "you must know that two such were never made before and that the spirit that looks out of them—" he hesitated.

"Go on!" she said. "I feel a little better already."

"But I'm not very comfortable," he said frankly. "I'm afraid I'll break the arm."

"But *I'm* comfortable," objected Mrs. Lindley, "and I don't believe you'll break the arm——"

But he had risen.

She stared at him.

He was big and she was little, and he

stooped and picked her up in his arms and then seated himself in the selfsame chair.

"Why, Rex!" she said, a little appalled.

He put his arm around her and drew her close and put his hand against her head and drew *that* close.

"Why, Rex," she said, struggling a little.

"You didn't know that I could draw, too—did you?" he said, "or that I could draw you so quickly?"

At that her lips parted merrily.

"It's a joke—isn't it?" she asked. "But, truly, I'm all comforted now, and I think I'd better go——"

"No, I don't think so," said Lindley hastily. "And if you will give the subject an instant's reflection I feel sure that you won't think so either. I have no mustache and I keep you happy when you are with me; I consider your talent as something that oversteps genius and I adore your eyes. If you are lonesome, why—" he kissed her and ended the discussion.

"And the gypsy said so, too," said Mrs. Lindley, an hour later. "How strange that she knew."



VIOLETS IN HEAVEN

By Charlotte Elizabeth Wells

I WONDER if your eyes are wet
For joy, when heaven's first violet
Awakens the Celestial Spring;
Or can it be that ye forget,
Enthralled by those transcendent hours,
The sweet earth-passion of the flowers?

'Tis planted there for memory;
Oh, radiant ones look down and see
The little purple fragrant thing;
God lets it bloom in heaven that ye
Forget not in transcendent hours
The sweet earth-passion of the flowers.

THE STRENGTH OF HIS ARMS

By Amos De Lany

THE sun beat straight down into the open skylight over the *Kenesaw's* engines, and Widener, the first assistant engineer, dozing on a high stool near the dynamo, caught a ray in his eyes as he looked upward. He smiled, for it jibed with his thoughts, and he squinted approvingly at the dazzling reflections from brass valves and polished steel rods.

The vessel was alongside her wharf, and almost deserted. An infrequent clanking behind the fire-room bulkhead told of the unwilling labors of the man who maintained steam for the donkey-engines, and an occasional muffled step past the upper grating showed that the stewards, at least, never kept holiday.

It was both cool and dusk where Widener sat, for the sunlight, white-hot at the level of the deck, lost its warm colors as it sifted down the thirty-five feet of bars and rods and slippery ladders, and the engineer, half-asleep but wholly adream, his feet on so high a rung that his folded elbows rested on his knees, his chin drooping helplessly, was at his happiest. The reek of hot oil and the honest blackness of coal-smut were delicious to him and the companionship of steel giants delightful, for they meant power, and he loved and worshipped grim strength.

Clothed only in shirt and trousers, after the manner of hard-working men at sea, his slender shoulders and his thin, bowed neck were bare, making his rather large head, with its weight of dogmatic, forethrust jaw, seem grotesquely out of proportion. His length of spreading limbs was drawn up under him, giving him less wiriness to the eye than he had when in motion. Above

the heavy jaw was a trim, black mustache, squarely cut; a delicate nose; slightly prominent; large, earnest brown eyes; a high forehead and straight, black Jewish hair. A veneer of tan swept down to the flapping edges of the undershirt and veiled his proper color, fresh and ruddy—but the jaw and the nose held attention, one assertive, prognathic, pragmatical; the other ascetic, benevolent, like a dreamer's.

Sitting in the enfeebled sunlight, his half-closed eyes filled with satisfying blur of crossheads, slipper-guides, cranks, shafts and rocker-arms, he was thanking the sun for its illimitable energy, and gloating over the tiny part of that vast store which was needed to hoard away the black, paleozoic fossils which men call coal and upon which all things modern lean so heavily. The adoration of might was his religion, and he made bold, bluff heartiness his ideal. Utterly godless, save for this rough worship, he was not prepensely a brute, for nothing that could tell him of the crudity and coarseness of the thought-pattern he weaved himself had ever come into his life. He was nearly thirty, and he had lived his boyhood and the years since in the engine-rooms of a motley succession of tramp steamships, forming his mind and all its thoughts on the incarnate strength and energy, the forcefulness, the inevitability of all things around him.

His taste was consistent, for everything virile pleased him. The vast, stiff frame of a steel ship was strength—solid, irresistible, incapable of remorse, and he loved it for its bulldog traits. Graceful yachts, dainty designs, sea-going playthings, disgusted

him. He liked battleships for the thickness of their hides and coal barges because they were stubborn. Once he went to a circus and stood for hours before the cage of a bull hippopotamus, basking in its massive smile and angry when it was teased. All things masculine he believed were at least supportable; but fragility, clingingness, dependence, ruffled his intolerance alarmingly, and subterfuge turned his blood to fire.

He pursued his ideals with the same hot haste, and within the limits permitted by his prejudices he was generous, altruistic, almost tender at times. Careful of the men under him, eager to right wrongs, meaning always to live cleanly and speak the truth, he was at least genuine, even where he was most at fault.

And this fantasia-building bull of Bashan was thinking of marriage. The girl had picked him out, and he was not unwilling, for, he repeated again and again, it was a man's duty to marry and he would not shirk. He liked her, too, when she was not more than usually enigmatical, and he would have been incapable, anyhow, of maliciously wronging a woman. Yet, so stupendous was the squint in his view of life that the inner meanings of it all were entirely hidden from him, and through his ignorance he displayed a selfishness he would have disowned in shame had he seen it as it was.

A scuffling footstep on the steel deck beside him brought him to his feet. A round-faced boy, in shabby trousers and greasy blouse, with knuckle-marks of grime in the corners of his eyes and mouth, and his hair shaved tight to his scalp, was offering him a plate of crew-bread and a bowl of coffee.

"Four o'clock, sir," said the lad, grinning.

"You don't have to bring this below except when we're at sea," remarked Widener.

"I likes to do more'n I'm hired for," the boy replied.

The engineer eyed him curiously, and tasted the coffee.

"Augh! Coal oil!" he sputtered,

grimacing. "You've just been filling lamps, boy."

He picked up the biscuits and flicked with his thumbnail the black finger-marks on each; then, smiling broadly, he opened a small cupboard screwed to the bulkhead and took from it a tin pail gay with the labels of a West Hartlepool chandler.

"Know what this brown jelly is?" he asked. The boy shook his head mournfully, and Widener laughed. "I thought not," he said. "It's soap. Take it along, and use it once in a while." After the lad had gone, he threw away the coffee and hardtack. "Right out of the gutter," he said to himself. "But he'll learn in time. Anything but a shirk." He hesitated a moment, looking about the engines with a practised eye, tapping the telegraph dial thoughtfully, and at last started for the main deck. On the upper grating he paused, examining the screw-thread of a small worm-and-wheel gear. There was a flaw in the collar of the wheel and he seized the rim in both hands and wrenched it quickly. It broke off with a snap.

"Cast-iron nowadays might as well be pewter," he frowned. "Lucky I saw that in time, though."

In the gangway he stumbled against his chief, a nervous little Welshman, dressed in his best, and just from ashore, evidently in haste.

"Ah, Mr. Widener," he gabbled. "Back unexpectedly, very. Met friends, forgot something. Casting broken? Oh, shameful; very. You broke it? Have to dock you for it. They cut off my last two indents a third each. Too bad. Sorry. By the way, tell the old man that messboy must go. No good. Worse with every change. Not even a new broom, eh? Actually made up my bunk with the pillows for'd. Flay him alive. Don't forget it."

He was moving away when Widener grasped his shoulder. The assistant's face was red through the film of tan, and his jaw was like a rock.

"Do your own dirty work, you cheap little stiff," he said. "I'm no tattle-tale."

The chief was aghast at this sacrilege. His mouth opened and closed, but he uttered no sound.

"Pack—your—clothes," he gasped at last, "and get—get—get out!"

Widener released the trembling shoulder, and shifted the iron wheel to his right hand. The engineer paled. "Don't strike!" he pleaded. His assistant laughed boisterously, and dropped the casting to the deck. With his arms akimbo and his head thrust forward, he mimicked the other's quick, prim accents.

"Made your bunk up wrong, eh?" he said. "You poor, feeble old maid! You doddering old grandmother! That for you!" He grasped the little man's hand and slapped him thrice on the wrist, gently. "Want me to tell tales on the poor little beggar, eh?" he said, in squeaky, mincing tones. "Get away from me, Old Fussy, or I'll hurt you, see if I don't!"

He flung the hand from him and stepped into his own state-room, where he hastily gathered together his belongings, glad that a deed long meditated had been at length brought to pass.

There was no one in sight when he crossed the deck a half-hour later and stepped from the bulwark to the wharf. He was clothed in blue serge, with tan shoes and a straw hat, and he carried gloves, and a slender cane, which twisted like a tempered foil as he thrust savagely at the stringers of the dock. In the street he stopped a truckman and gave directions for the removal of his trunks from the *Kenesaw* to a hotel, after which he set off briskly, his long, thin legs carrying him at a surprising gait for a sailor. He had a disagreeable duty to perform, and he meant to get it out of the way as quickly as might be. An hour before, the bare possibility of his present situation had not been dreamed of, but his impetuous contempt for his chief had broken bounds; he had turned the page and now he meant to read all that was written on the new sheet, forgetting everything that had gone before.

From the noisy waterfront thoroughfare he turned into a spicy, moss-grown

canyon of warehouses, and from that to a busier street of grimy print-shops, sail-lofts, oyster-bars and restaurants. The heat of the sun and the friction of his own thoughts were becoming oppressive, when he paused before a short basement stairway, flanked by tubbed box-trees and mounted with tarnished brass. "'Ansel Reck's Saloon,'" he read from the dingy sign. "The very man," and he drew a long breath, and plunged down the steps.

A pair of swinging half-doors let him into a cramped vestibule, cut in two by a glassed cigar-case. Straight ahead, he could see a dim and musty cavern—cool, cobwebbed, dreamish; making him feel as if he were snuggling warm in bed, half-asleep, while north-east winds and Winter rains raged and howled without. It was another world from the hot, raw, smelly rattle of the street. Part of the view of the rear was cut off by a gaudy screen of cheap carving, painfully incongruous with the somber dignity of the original wood-work. Behind it burned two gas-jets, giving light enough to distinguish substance from shadow, but scarcely sufficient for the recognition of color. The entry was better lighted with the lateral rays from the level of the sidewalk, and Widener saw rather a tragic note in the dirty intricacies of the ceiling ornaments, the stained and scarred and drabbed wainscoting, patched with rough planks in odd places; the mournful austerity of the great clock, like a coffin on end, ticking away its contempt in emphatic accents.

As he turned, a white-haired man appeared behind the showcase, eying him from under a pair of shaggy gray brows, while his smooth, rounded mustache was twisting from the quizzical curling and flexing of his upper lip. He crossed his forearms on the counter, and his head was bent on his square shoulders as if he were neckless. He was stout, but of a healthy, wholesome appearance, and his tightly buttoned cardigan jacket seemed like a military fatigue garment. Helmeted, with a dash of gold braid, he would have provoked admiration, and there was a

broad look of good-heartedness in his face.

"Is it you, Mr. Widener?" he said, with only a trace of foreign accent. "Such a stranger, you are."

They shook hands, and the old man brought from the rear a bottle and glasses.

"You use seltzer in your *schnapps*?" he inquired. "My regards! . . . Let's visit awhile."

In the main room were a few tables and chairs, and they seated themselves where Widener could view at a glance the dingy, time-stained furnishings of what had once been a brilliant resort. The American pride of looking always as if the shutters have been this morning for the first time removed had no place in the heart of the soldierly old Wend, and the once gay drinking-room grew grimmer with his full concurrence. The bottles on the sideboard shelf were the same that had stood there when he became their owner thirty years before; the bar was of an even older pattern, and its surface had been chinked and dented distressfully by the pounding of heavy stein-bottoms and the ringing of silver coins. There was not even the usual mechanical device for assuring the honesty of the attendants, for the old man, with the pottering assistance of a renegade printer, everything vicious a man can be who means no wrong, guided all things with his own eye and hand until the end of each was fulfilled and its epitaph written in his banking account.

Widener, breathing the atmosphere of the place, his brain filled with visions of sunny hop-fields, subterranean acres of wine-casks, breweries with their thousands of workmen; his enriching imagination stripping the sordidness away as husks from the ripe corn, was speechless in contemplation of the mighty power of the spirit of fermentation. Its use or abuse was not pertinent—the power was there, dazzling alike in its historical ramifications or its prophetic possibilities. But the old man was waiting to hear his message, and with a sigh he came out of his gloating and in chastened tones

talked of a woman, internally ashamed of the anticlimax and half-sorry that his ideals of straightforwardness had brought him on such an errand.

"The fact is, Mr. Reck," he said abruptly, "I've lost my place, and I can't marry your daughter."

The wily old man was at a disadvantage, for pride of family ruled him and his greatest sorrow and most headstrong passion met and intertwined about the sad truth that his money could not lift from his women the shadow that its source cast upon them. A vague suspicion soured his broad face.

"Ain't my Bert'a good enough, hey?" he demanded. There was no answer. Widener had no stake in the girl. It was a man's duty to marry, he was telling himself again, and he would not shirk; but the choosing of a wife was of no importance. Any one of a hundred thousand would do as well as any other. Only, he would not deceive; he would not marry without an income. That would not be manly, and that was the limit of his concern in the matter.

"You damn' hound! You think you throw my girl down, hey?" growled Reck, and Widener admired him for his aggressiveness. The spell of the gloomy cave was upon him; for all his fancied forcefulness he was a dreamer, and this quiet, dim tomb appealed to his fantastic conception of the dignity of thirst. He talked quietly of his reasons, and the old man's rancor was soothed.

"I tell you, young man," he said, ruffling his eyebrows and twisting his mustache, "Bert'a gets what she wants, always. She's got to have it. Now, the day you marry her, I'll make you a good place here, for I'm getting old. How's that?"

He was lighting his pipe, when a scuffling on the stairs startled him.

"*Gott!* Is it six o'clock yet?" he cried. "Julius! *Jul-ius!* Lunch, lunch, lunch!"

Widener arose as a score of workmen clattered up to the bar and called for beer and ale to moisten their shop-dry throats. He felt a thrill of pleas-

ure at the sturdy good-humor, the frank self-sufficiency, the quiet strength of these craftsmen, and he moved toward the stairway, exulting in the regnant wholesomeness of hearty manhood.

"Say, you, is it a go?" Reck was deserting his clamorous customers in his eagerness to hear Widener's answer. The engineer suddenly understood clearly the old man's offer.

"Indeed it is," he said warmly. "I'll do it tomorrow!" and he laughed at the other's doubtful face.

II

LATE the next morning, Widener was at the door of a steep-gabled house of the painfully ornate type of the latter 70's. The first story was of pressed brick, trimmed with buff and chocolate abominations and edged with brown-stone; the second was of timber construction, and the huge attic was surmounted by a tower in the shape of a gingerbread dog-house. The upper portion of each window was filled with stained glass; gables, fretwork, grilles, carvings and lattices were sprinkled recklessly about; a cast-iron fountain played merrily on the lawn, and various stone and plaster animals disported themselves sadly around it.

Oppressed by the florid stuffiness of the place, Widener yawned as he waited for the door to open. He heard footsteps approaching, heard a petulant voice cry "Bert'a! Come back here!" and a moment later a trim maid was inviting him to enter. In the rich parlor—furiously rich it was—he found a ponderous old woman, smothered in laces and silks, who waved her jewels at him pacifically and led his eyes captive on a triumphing tour of the room's gaudy magnificences. She rallied him in weighty fashion and not very good English on his neglect of certain social duties, the existence of which he curtly denied. Blind to his curling lip, she talked at length of the joys of the last *männerchor* masquerade, and said that she could not see why selling beer was any worse than making it, and he knew the people of whom she was speaking.

She grew more obsequious as he snubbed her more plainly.

"I sha'n't wait any longer," he heard a gay voice exclaim, and Bertha entered. Widener's unpractised eye, sharpened by distaste, suddenly perceived that the girl was of a different type from her surroundings. He observed, wondering why it was for the first time, that she was of gentle, fragile build. As he pressed her fingers stiffly and kissed her, he even saw that his wrist had bone and sinew enough for her whole hand, and when he looked at her eyes with their drooping lids and the corresponding upturning of the laugh-wrinkles in her mouth-corners he might have seen why he had not noticed these things before. Nothing about her suffered itself to be remembered save herself, yet her individuality was so draped in good taste that, except in moments of excitement, the whole was visible only while the parts were not too closely scrutinized.

Forced to admit her charm, Widener was not willing to concede it to her alone. It was a man's duty to marry, he reflected again, and he would not shirk. But he would be no happier with this woman than with any other. It was no drawback that she liked him; it was merely irrelevant and immaterial. And, besides, his heart was full of the new work before him, and he felt its throbbing as he hammered and twisted the phrase, "strong meat for men," on every anvil of his brain. There might be a shady side; everything has that. But it was man's work, and to crowd shoulder and elbows with untrammelled, bluff, outspoken virility was what he wanted.

The older woman swept out with a frown and a smile, and the girl seated herself and watched his face sympathetically, almost eagerly.

"I know what you're thinking," she said, and made a quick little grasping gesture with her left hand, comprehensive, meaning the red plush and the tapestries and the giddy mirror display. "It's worse every time you come."

He nodded his head silently, and pointed with his thumb toward the door through which the pillar of silks had vanished. The light in the girl's eyes fluttered, a quaint droop curved her lower lip, and the gentle swell of her breast was raised and lowered hastily.

"You—you must make allowances for her," she said. "She is so good, and she only does it all because she thinks it better for—me, I suppose. Really, it is all for me."

Widener did not understand. The first show of emotion made him want to be angry; women were so ungovernable, so treacherous in the matter of tears. But the quaint, drooping lip, the unmistakable pain he had caused, concerned him deeply in spite of himself, and he determined to see if this emotion which made him blush could not be rationalized.

"You don't mean to say you like all this?" he demanded, using in his turn a vague, comprehensive gesture—all that was necessary, since both knew, without cataloguing, the glomerate unpleasantness.

"Like it? Yes!" she replied, daring him with her eyes.

"Well, I don't, and there's an end of that!" said Widener, sulkily, reaching for his cane.

"But, Jim, wait——"

"Wait! For what? You said you liked——"

"Yes, but——"

"That's all, then."

They were in the hall, somber enough, with its thick, soft draperies only lighted by a pair of stained-glass stairway windows. Bertha paused a moment with her hands raised and her face averted. Suddenly, without knowing how, he had her in his arms.

"Jim," she sobbed, "you ought to know—it's very shameful of you to make me tell you—I ought to like it! I ought to—I've got to—but I do—don't like it a bit!"

It was quite within Widener's understanding that she should not be at ease in that house, though it was like his density to put down her insistence

of duty as a mere vagary, not worth a second thought. Always eager to right such wrongs as his mental calipers could measure, he drew a great breath of relief as she stepped from the half-light of the feminine underbrush into the open frankness of manlike confession; and he was heartily sorry for her distress.

"Listen, Jim," she said, wiping her eyes; "perhaps you can understand. I do love my father and my mother. You can't think how good they have been to me. There has never been anything that I wanted that they haven't tried to get for me—even—even you!" She smiled faintly, and drew closer to him. "It was for me that they bought this house and furnished it. We used to live down there, over the—the saloon, until I was twelve years old and the other girls at school—you do know what it is? They've never had a moment's happiness here, except when they thought I was enjoying it. But—but, you know, the house, everything, it's all in their taste, and it's very wrong of me not to like it—but there, that is nothing! It's the money! Jim, I've never gone to bed since I've been old enough to know of those things without praying that those sad-faced women and those babies and those big, brawny men might not come to me in my dreams and tear me in pieces for their money. And, oh! so many nights they have come, and I have tried to tell them I would give it all—all to them, but I've never been able to make them hear. I hate it! I hate it!"

Her eyes were dry, and her cheeks flaming. Widener steadied her with his arm.

"But since I've known you, it's been better," she whispered. "For I've dreamed of good things we'll do. Oh, it seems so long!"

"Not so very long," said Widener, smiling. "Only half an hour."

"Half an—half a year, you mean."

"I mean now. I came here today to take you with me to get married."

Her tenderness passed as quickly

as her distress. She was angry, and her soft eyes blazed.

"And did you dare to think I would?"

"Certainly," he said, still smiling.

"Another month," she pleaded.

"Today!"

"A week—tomorrow, then."

"Now, or never," he insisted.

She drew herself haughtily away. When she spoke, it was with crushing dignity. "Very well, then. Let it be never!"

He shrugged his shoulders, and laughed as she faced him, angrily tapping her foot on the heavy carpet.

"Jim, you are too cruel," she protested. "It's not right. It would not be nice."

"Get your hat, and come along," he replied, opening the door and stepping into the vestibule. The noon sun was blazing down, dazzling him after the dim hallway. He stretched his long limbs slowly in the warm air, filling his lungs with the careless abandonment of conscious power. As he reached the sidewalk, the door behind him clicked, and, looking back, he saw Bertha tripping across the veranda toward him.

III

"THE trick is turned, Reck," said Widener for the fourth time, but still the old man's wide features were incredulous.

"It's not possible!" he repeated. "You young fellows are great jokers. Heh! but you are a hustler, though. And Bert'a? To go off like that, and never let us know! I tell you, I'm afraid of you. I must look out for the cash. Heh! heh! heh!"

He laughed half-heartedly, and twisted the froth from his mug of beer with a dexterous back-hand motion. For some time he puffed at his pipe in silence, while Widener watched the lean little Julius, with his bristling rat's mustache, wiping the long bar and suggestively shifting the empty glasses before a pair of men too deeply interested in each other's undertones to remember the good of the house.

"In the old country, now," began Reck, in a tone of unwonted familiarity, "when I was a lad in Naundorf, in the Ober Spreewald, you understand, forty years ago—why, man, it took a week to marry! Yes, sir; the truth. The man wore a blue coat and he was covered with twigs and ribbons and flowers, and the bride had to have a black dress and a wreath and ribbons, and they had a great procession—all in boats, you know, in the Spreewald—with musicians. *Gott!* How we used to dance! And all the wedding gifts in a boat by themselves, and we young rogues would never let that boat pass, you had better believe, until the groom paid us handsomely. And then, at the house we feasted and drank for three or four days. Nothing was too good for the neighbors. And the bride couldn't go home for a month, for that would spoil the marriage. . . . Well, Bert'a has her own way, I suppose. . . . These children!"

His eyebrows and his mustache twisted, and Widener coughed uneasily, for a man's emotion embarrassed him. The men at the bar had taken Julius's hint and he was filling their glasses, happy at his little success. The old man thumped his empty half-liter on the table.

"My boy," he said, rising, "I'll keep my word. Make yourself at home here; I'm proud to welcome Bert'a's man. Julius will arrange everything for you, and Monday we'll talk business. I'm going home to talk to the old lady awhile. I was younger once—"

His voice broke, and he took off his cardigan jacket and donned his coat and hat in silence. Widener did not see him go out, for he was already examining with keen interest the time-stained pictures, the dirty carvings, the mildewed woodwork of the gloomy old room, his heart warm with elation as he builded strange fantasies about everything he saw, and the troubles of old Reck, of Bertha, of anyone—even himself—the smallest cloud in his sky. His lonesome years at sea, the part of his life he was so glad was gone, had marked him all the same, and in build-

ing up his blind worship of strength had made him selfish. Though he erred through ignorance, the mistake was fundamental; and it needed an experience deeper than any sorrow he had ever known to teach him the futility of the attempt at one-sided living.

From his chair in the shadow of the farthest corner of the basement he could see the feet of the passing crowds on the sidewalk. Even louder at times than the rattle of trucks and the slow thunder of electric cars came to his ears the subdued but penetrating sound of the simultaneous contact of hundreds of pieces of sole leather with the stone pavement. Now and then a pair of shoes turned out of the eddying torrent and descended the stairs, reversing the visual sequence of a ship on the horizon, for at first only the feet, then the knees could be seen, and last of all the head and its hat came into view.

Supremely satisfied, Widener saw Julius attending to the demands of his customers—noiseless, sly, watchful, his beady eyes and the stiff, straight, white hairs of his upper lip inevitably reminding one of a rat in a white jacket. A youth wanted a cocktail, and the scalawag typesetter snatched the syrup, the bitters, the gin, the whisky, successively from their murky hiding places on the shadowy backbar with astonishing deftness.

"Ho! ho! He can see in the dark. He ain't no daylight animal," cried a roughly dressed man with his seventh drink of whisky before him. "He's lived underground so long he's turnin' into a snake. Ain't ye, Jul? Am I right or am I wrong? Say!"

Julius replied with a thin, watery smile, and was at once invited to join his complimentary acquaintance in a drink. He filled a whisky glass with beer, half froth, and, after rapping the glass smartly on the bar by way of courtesy to the other, swallowed a teaspoonful of the liquid and threw the rest away.

"That's a regular barkeeper's drink!" cried the patron. "I remember the time, Jul, when you an' me worked up in Sanford's print-shop, an' you

couldn't get beer-glasses high enough to hold all you wanted for a nickel. Am I right or am I wrong? Say!"

"It tastes different on this side of the bar," said Julius, coldly.

"Ah-huh! I've tended bar myself for twenty years," the rough-clad one replied, "but it's been on the wrong side. Oh, hell! I'm goin' to live anyhow till I die. Am I right? Say, Jul, let's you an' me have another. Oh, I got the price, all right. Ain't I got the price? Say, am I right or am I wrong? Ain't that fifteen cents, Jul? Don't say I never treated you!"

Widener was glad when this noisy fellow stumbled out. His hoarse, boisterous voice was out of place in what the engineer wanted to believe was a calm retreat, a cool grotto, a dim shrine, where men might drop for a moment out of the bald sunlight and refresh their hearts with a taste of peace before they plunged again into the vortex. He was glad, too, when Julius asked him to help in preparing the lunch for the six-o'clock crowd, and after the cheese and sausages and salads and biscuits were arrayed on the lunch-bar he took a clean towel and helped the bartender with the glasses, which were emptied faster than one man could wash them. He felt a chill of nervousness, a nameless clutch at the pit of his stomach, of which he was highly ashamed. But he was afraid of it, too, perhaps because it was new to him, and his fear was greater than his shame so that he willingly kept himself working to drive it away.

At seven o'clock, the place was quiet again and Julius's supper was brought in from the restaurant next door. Widener put on his hat and coat and mounted the stairs as quickly as he could. It was a long mile to his hotel, but he walked it in fifteen minutes, still carrying his burden of dread.

Bertha was waiting for him in one of the parlors. Her face was rather pale, he noticed; but as she saw him the corners of her mouth turned up in her familiar smile and the tiny laugh-wrinkles danced about her eyes. All of his self-possession came back at the

sight, and as they entered the dining-room he was pleasantly conscious of the well-bred attention they were attracting, and his doubts of himself and of his judgment were lost in the pride of ownership of the charming girl beside him. He had never felt so toward her before, and his deadly limitations, his half-development, would not permit him to see the reason for the slight yet fundamental change. Almost on the edge of an astounding discovery about himself, which another hour of Ansel Reck's saloon would no doubt have brought to him, all the old pride of power, exultant masculinity, blindness of heart, was on him now, and, pluming himself on his keenness of vision and feeling his backbone like a bar of pig-iron under his coat, he was about to demonstrate his independence.

They chatted with mild interest of the evening news, each maintaining a creditable appearance of unconcern, but as the coffee was served Bertha caught Widener's erratic glance and frowned as if puzzled. He feigned blindness, and she grasped his hand for a moment across the small table.

"I went home for some things this afternoon," she said quietly, "and I heard about you, Jim."

"You did, eh? Oh, you did, eh?" Widener writhed at the silliness of his answer, but nothing else would come to his lips. They sat in silence until she smiled at him again.

"You didn't need to do it," she said.

"Let's drop it," he suggested. "It doesn't concern."

Again she smiled, and he braced himself to be very stern.

"You don't know what it is," she declared. "You couldn't stand an hour of it."

"Your father—" he began, but she interrupted him, her cheeks aflame.

"That is unkind!" she exclaimed, and she added more gently: "Would *you* trade everything—everything—with him?"

"It makes no difference!" said Widener angrily, rising from the table. "I've agreed to go back and I'm going to stick it through."

They turned into a quiet corridor. She nestled close to him as they walked. "Jim," she said, "honestly, you aren't built for it. Let's go away somewhere for a while. We've lots of time and no need to be serious for a good many weeks. Really, Jim, you know you're a better man than that!"

She had been brave. Her marriage was to have taken the black spot out of her life, yet both the shattering of her dearest hopes and an avalanche of doubts and harassments had fallen upon her between his going and coming that afternoon. She had learned very suddenly that it was not Widener she had loved, but what Widener had to give her; yet she had determined to make the best of it, and it was not until her heart fluttered its broken ideal into her speech that she made a false step. Her last sentence touched a raw place. The consideration which Widener, sure she was right, was preparing to extend to her evident sorrow, was hastily withdrawn. He stopped, and shook his forefinger in her face, meanly, cruelly.

"Now, see here!" he said. "I'm your husband, and if you want to leave me, go on! I sha'n't stop you. Only, you'll never see *me* again. Mind that! But, if you choose to live with me, you choose to let me earn a living my own way."

"Jim," she replied, "you know I choose you, anyway. But it isn't a question of what I like—it's a question of your own—your own self-respect!"

He had expected a scene, buckets of tears at least, and the careful self-possession with which she dragged his own conscience from its hiding-place and brandished it before him, left him gasping. Playing for time, he tried to fling off a killing sarcasm.

"You'll be telling me next we married for love," he said, and he caught the poorly hidden smile that his affected bravado brought forth. He knew that she was right; he knew, too, that only her voicing of his own convictions had stiffened his neck, and the knowledge angered him so that he determined to go wrong at all costs. Once he had

thought that he had carried on sufficient experiments in the analysis of the girl's heart to be sure of his ground, knowing how much of himself need be added to her individuality to produce any desired reaction, and his sudden awakening to the fact that she could read his heart with only one flash of her eyes enraged him still more. Without another word, he left her and hurried toward the saloon. As he approached the stairway a snatch of a vile parody on a pretty song of the day came to his ears, mingled with rough laughter and the odor of stale beer. He shuddered.

There were a dozen men at the bar, one or two of them well dressed, most of them lounging negligently with one foot on the rail near the floor. The air was blue with tobacco smoke, and the four gas-jets, aided by a kerosene lamp at each end of the room, barely dispelled the gloom.

"The old man ain't come back," Julius told him. "It's the first Saturday night he's missed in two years. Well, he ain't needed, anyhow. You're big enough to bounce four or five o' these mugs if they get too joyful. I use this for mine." He fondled significantly a beautifully polished thorn stick.

Widener walked uneasily back and forth, watching the men empty their glasses, eying new-comers with troubled gaze and catching snatches of conversation. No fantasia of personified power arose before him now; the reality was too basely sordid for dreams of secluded shrines.

A thin young woman, sallow-faced, in the dress of the Salvation Army, entered, with a bundle of papers under her arm. Widener met her, and pressed some coins into her hand.

"God bless you!" she said, and tried to pass him.

"But we don't want women in here," said Widener.

"You don't, hey?" she sneered. "Well, it's a public place, I guess, an' I got as good a right here as you have!"

Her eyes snapped angrily, and she pushed him from her. A bleary youth turned from the bar and approached

them on his way to the door. She thrust a paper before him and he paused, wavering unsteadily and trying to clear his vision by alternate squints and scowls.

"Naw, I won't buy no paper," he said thickly, "but I'll give you ten cents to see you dance the hooch——"

He went down under the heavy blow Widener dealt him, and, slowly scrambling to his feet, lurched out, his hands to his jaws. The woman followed him, speechless.

"Number one!" quavered Julius, his thin lip lifting in a diluted smile. "I'm afraid we're goin' to have a rough house tonight."

Widener's eyes blurred and his features were fixed in an expression of the deepest disgust, against which he struggled vainly. Men came into the room, drank and departed; not all of them noisy or even coarse, but not one who was not visibly the worse for his tarrying. Julius served them silently, his keen little eyes like dots of fire, his ears hearing nothing but calls for more drink. Honest, capable, doing his duty fearlessly, without emotion, here was a type of straightforward virility—but the engineer's facile imagination could weave no romance of power about this automatic devil in a white jacket. He could see at last, plainly enough, that not all strength was divine; but his lesson was only started, for as the hours drifted past, a panoramic nightmare, although convicted of his folly he found always less tolerable the thought of returning to Bertha and admitting the depth of his misjudgment. If she had insisted, he told himself, he would not have come back. At least, he had told her that if she left him he would not return. Conceding that she had known better than he what this accursed place meant, why had she not stayed by her guns? He wanted nothing to do with a woman who would let him entangle himself in such an iniquitous web. She had known all about it—the fault was hers! There bubbled to the surface all the petty meanness that is inseparable from even a great nature when it has run wild along its

own wilful course, uncurbed by the recognition of that sacrifice which is necessary to a true completeness.

There was a crash outside and a series of thumps that made the glassware chime. Barely missing the shaky screen in his lurching, a hatless man plunged into the room, his collar-ends flapping under his ears and his ragged clothing covered with dirt. Julius had his cherished blackthorn in readiness and the others were edging toward the door when Widener caught the intruder by the elbow and whirled him about. As he did so, the stairs clattered again under a pair of slipshod feet and a thin little woman entered, her freckled face smeared with blood and tears. The man wrenched himself loose and struck her a brutal blow in the face. Hardly had she fallen when Widener's fist crashed upon the nape of the fellow's neck and he, too, dropped.

"Number two and number three!" cried Julius, giggling, but the woman arose with a shriek, and seeing Widener about to administer further chastisement to the groveling wretch at his feet, she snatched the hanging lamp from its supporting bracket and dashed it full in the engineer's face.

He came to consciousness on the sidewalk, with the rattle of steel-shod hoofs in his ears. The man he had felled was lying, shackled, close by, and a big policeman was seated on the prisoner's back, holding fast to a struggling woman's arm. With a grating noise, a patrol-wagon cramped at the curb and a sergeant and three officers alighted, grinning. Widener got to his feet, his head buzzing and his heart sick. The saloon was somewhat damaged and Julius was frantically trying to put it to rights, but he cared nothing for that. Neither did the gash on his forehead nor the half-dozen small burns on his cheeks worry him. He knew the handcuffed man for the one who had intoxicated himself there in the afternoon, and the rough justice of his own hurts as a sort of recompense for the woman's bruises appealed to him. But the cold, crude ghastliness of it all covered him with

a devouring shame, and his measure of disgust was at last running over. Besides, in the woman's maniacal defense of her brutal master he could see, though faintly, for his head was still reeling, something of the reason why Bertha had not persisted in her objection to his return.

Giving his name to the sergeant, blindly promising to appear in court and refusing to be taken to a surgeon's office, he shouldered his way through the gaping crowd which the patrol-wagon had attracted, and boarded a passing street-car. Still dazed, he left the car a few blocks further on, and found himself on the water front. He could smell the good sweet smoke driven in clouds from the funnel of a freighter that would sail soon after daylight. The quickening impulse of the old associations caught him up. The hours since he had quarreled with his chief seemed to have been years—and such mean, unhappy years they had been! His youth and the long time since had been lived in the company of the steady, dumb, inevitable steel giants who drove these thick-skinned monsters to the world's end and back. They were his friends—his lame ideals came true in their company. The nausea passed away, and, wilfully putting behind him everything else, he strode down the wharf.

IV

HE awoke the next morning in the firemen's forecastle of a German steamship bound for Limon, the Caribbean port of Costa Rica. He had parleyed with the quartermaster at the gang-plank until the chief engineer came from ashore; and, although his clothing and his battered face were against him, he quickly convinced that officer of his knowledge of the science of draughts and combustion, and was ordered forward with the company of beach-combers, coal-passers and flotsam non-descripts who were to keep the vessel's boilers hot for the coming twenty days.

He said nothing of his engineer's certificate, for engineers are not hired at midnight, and he only wanted to get to sea. Very weary, he flung himself into an empty bunk and slept soundly until a deep blast of a tug's whistle sounded just under the port-hole against which his head was braced.

A wisp of waste steam drifted through the opening and its irony smell enlivened him at once. It was daylight without, cold, gray and misty, but the one lamp owned by the fore-castle was still needed. A few men had not yet left their bunks, and half-a-dozen others were talking in low monotonous. Widener knew that the first watch was already below, and that the ship was about to sail. There was yet time to go ashore, to gather up the loose ends and try again, but he shrank from the thought. The raw east wind, the black dirt that fouled him at every motion and the coal grime that settled on him if he were still, the certainty of desperate work to be done, of bodily hardships coming, did not move him. He was not a physical coward and he was in tune with life at sea, for what soul he had was born there. Those ideals of his did not pass current ashore, he thought, and if the life he was throwing himself into now was primitive or elemental it was no worse for that if he could forget his mistakes in it and work himself again into his own respect. His courage only took him to the point of admitting that he had been wrong. In his blindness, he thought to right the wrong by punishing himself, still possessed of the belief that the universe lay within his borders and that he owed no duty to any outlander. The deep disgust had not left him, either, and though he was ashamed that for awhile he had blamed Bertha for his own wilfulness she was included in the distaste from which he was fleeing.

The tugs had their way at last and the ship was in the channel, grumbling and sighing gently as her pulse began to beat. Widener felt a thrill when the deck rose and fell in the first heave of the voyage. The hoarse cries of the

deck-hands without, the rattle and clank of the donkey-engine, the swish of the stiff brushes as the dirt of a week of lay-days was attacked, brought him into feeling at home. He ate of the rough breakfast with relish enough and went below at eight o'clock, almost happy. His engineer's eye took in the fire-room at a glance. The ship was nearly new, built in Copenhagen for a Hamburg firm to charter to American merchants, and her constructors had repeatedly sacrificed comfort to appearances; but her boilers were Scotch, and Widener knew what they liked. He went at his work greedily, throwing the coal far back at first to the hottest part of the blaze; breaking it up there, drawing the thoroughly ignited fragments toward the door and mounding them in a raging heap. Three fires were under his care, and although he was stripped to the waist he found the heat almost unbearable until a crust of sweat and cinders had caked over his naked skin. The ship steamed well and the coal was of fair quality, so that, once broken in, Widener did not find the labor distressing. A fireman next him, weak from a spree, was not so fortunate, and his collapse was hastened by the atrocious dialect in which a Hamburg engineer cursed his duplicity in signing on for a strong man's pay. They poured water on his head and braced his fluttering heart with brandy, ending by putting his shovel in his hands and giving him a hearty cuff on the ear.

When his watch of four hours was ended, Widener bathed himself with salt water and soft soap and sought the steward for the replenishing of his wardrobe. With eight hours of rest before him, he first had his dinner and afterward stretched himself on a blanket spread on the deck and slept. From eight until twelve that night he was below again, the work pushing his vitality hard and pleasing him the more as he saw that he was fit and able to master it. He began to grow exultant. Once more he was basking in the sunlight, gloating over the prodigality of nature, full of the joy of living, wor-

shipping strength and proud of his place as a lieutenant of the sun, the life-giver. For, he reasoned, the sun in the world's childhood was building the deep green forests of ferns and turning them into coal, and so it is in the sun that all the plexus of living and doing aboard a steamship has its origin. But the men, who dig and shovel and sweat in the grimy bowels of the craft that the fires may roar and the boilers seethe and the steel arteries fill with living steam, carrying light and power and heat and life to every part of Leviathan's framework—they are the sun's lieutenants, the living link between the archæan years and now: they are magicians, disguised as naked, dirty, tireless, half-savage brutes, unlocking fresh marvels with every pound of coal they heave into the furnaces.

But this could not last. Not all the grandeur of the images of potent actinism which he called up so lovingly could keep out of his mind a tiny, insistent thought of Bertha, which could not be crushed. He tried to make himself believe that the work was too hard for him, that he was only anxious to go back to his old life, and that his heart would be at ease on the day he again stood in his own engine-room. But the pride of ownership he had felt in the hotel returned at inconvenient seasons to harass him with the barbed reflection that he had thrown away something precious. Suddenly, he knew that he wanted her very much. From the moment in which he saw clearly the enormity of his meanness he felt no ease save when he was in the fire-room, shoveling furiously, drowning his emotion in rivers of perspiration, buying peace of mind at the expense of his muscles, and earning the cordial hatred of the other firemen who felt no such impetus within them.

He thought sadly of the wedding, a strange ceremony performed in a dingy office by an alderman who chewed tobacco! And his arms tingled as he remembered how she had turned, smiling, to him for a kiss. "We'll try not to make any mistakes," she had said. Mistakes! What else was there?

Was there anything he had done as it should have been done? He found himself absolving her from all blame, willingly blackening his own sins. To be sympathizing with another was something new, and he made up for it by harshly suppressing the thought of love wherever it cropped out, fighting against it, stamping it down, telling himself that love was moonshine and that his desire for her was no more than a matter of duty. All the same, before they anchored off Uvita light on the eighth day, he was consumed with anger at the vessel's slowness, and the four days of delay at Limon, while the lean little customs and health officers slept in hammocks on deck, left him nearly frantic. When he came out of the black gangway one midnight and felt the salt spume flying over the starboard bow and, looking upward, saw the stars tossing wildly as the ship rode the swell, he laughed gleefully.

"She surely has hold of the other end of the rope!" he said.

It was twilight when the vessel came alongside its wharf, a week later. Regardless of the money due him, Widener was over the side instantly. Cursing the time it stole from him, he was nevertheless obliged to buy new clothing. Presentable at last, and breathless, he hurried to his hotel. The clerk had forgotten him.

"Widener—Mrs. Widener? Umm-m-m, let's see——"

A book refreshed his memory. Bertha had paid her bill long ago and departed, leaving several trunks in the store-room. No, she had left no word. Widener went out as quickly as he had entered, a vague dread already upon him. Of course, she had gone home. He might have known that she would. But, an hour later, convinced that the gingerbread mansion was no longer inhabited, by unavailing maulings, echoed in the empty rooms, of all the boarded-up doors, he was traveling toward Reck's saloon as fast as a hired cab could take him. And there his last hope fled, for the saloon was closed and the windows were covered with that soapy frosting which usually

means that the interior thereby concealed is bare of all furnishings. There was a card on the door, and he descended the steps to read it. "To Let," it said.

Now, at length, was the sorrow come upon him that was able to lift from him the burden of selfish self-deceit which he had so eagerly assumed. At last the eyes of his mind were opened wide and his cribbed spirit saw itself as it really was.

Only one instant of despair, a single second of abasement was needed—but when it was over Widener knew by the shakiness of his legs, the weight of his diaphragm, the convulsive twitchings of his fingers, that it was complete. He recognized in that moment the emptiness of ideals that glorify strength alone, the folly of a rough-shod desire that wreaks its own way, the glad, eager necessity of sacrifice at every point; and, greatest of all, he had his first taste of the consuming passion that tells a man that he is a man, and why, and from whence and to what end all things are.

After the shock was over, he walked slowly down the street, full of delight at the long vistas of unexplored thought which his new point of view made visible to him. But his chief concern was to find Bertha, and he determined to read the back numbers of the newspapers, visit the real estate agents, see the police, advertise; it should go hard with him, but he would find her and claim her in a very few hours. Someone slapped him on the shoulder. He turned, and saw a thin, weazened face, with a bristling mustache, looking up at him.

"Hello, Julius!" he cried eagerly. "Where are they? What's wrong? What's become of the Recks?"

Julius kept his beady eyes on Widener's face as he parried the questions.

"Where've *you* been?" he said. "Some thought you was dead, but I knew better. Say, you wasn't very foxy."

"I've been where I couldn't possibly get back!" exclaimed Widener, and

Julius nodded his head slowly and smiled his thin, wan smile.

"Well," he said, "Reck's sold out an' gone back to the old country, or rather the old woman's made him do it. She always did run the——"

"And Bertha?" demanded Widener, his heart sinking.

Julius sneered. "You never mind about Bertha!" he replied aggressively. "She's where you can't do her no more harm. Say, if you'd been foxy, old horse, you'd have *married* her!"

"Married her?" repeated Widener stupidly. "Why, man, I *did* marry her! Where is she? Tell me, if you know, or——"

Julius interrupted him, nothing about him reminding Widener of a rat, now that a worthy emotion moved him.

"No, you won't, neither!" he declared. "If you did marry her, an' had the heart of a man in you, you'd never have left her the way you did. You're the kind of fellow thinks because a man tends bar he ain't no better 'n a dog, but I wouldn't never 'a' played such a dirty trick on *any* woman. When she went home and the old woman called her a name she'd no business to even think of, I wouldn't have been the man that caused it for a good, big, heapin' million, I'll tell you!"

Widener's face was drawn and haggard. It was part of the suffering which his former folly entailed upon him that he must always remember that, of the two, the little bartender had been the better man.

"Go on!" he exclaimed. "Tell me if she's safe now, and then rub it in as hard as you like!"

Julius peered up at him with a puzzled frown.

"I wish I knew if you was in earnest," he muttered. "Well, then, she's safe enough," he said suddenly, "an' earnin' her own livin', an' says she likes it better 'n all she's ever had or done in her life."

"Look here, Julius," said Widener, straightening himself. "Before God, I know I've played the yellow dog, but all I want is a chance to make it right!

I'll spend the last drop of my blood to do the square thing by that girl. Look at this." He handed the bartender his marriage certificate. "That's right enough, isn't it?" he asked, amused, in spite of his earnestness, at his deference to the little man he had despised.

"I believe you're all right," said Julius slowly. "She's holdin' copy up in Sanford's print-shop, where I'd be yet if I'd ever had a brain in my head."

Widener grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"You're a good fellow, Julius," he said. "Don't forget me and I'll show you I'm trying to do what's right."

At half-past seven the next morning he was patrolling the sidewalk before the stairway leading to the loft where Bertha was employed. A dozen times his heart leaped as he thought he saw her approaching, but each time he was disappointed. Eight o'clock came, and he was fearing that Julius had lied. His determination to find her was firmer than ever, his yearning for her hurt him with its straining and tugging at his nerves—and yet he was cast down and dispirited. Suddenly, raising his eyes from the sidewalk, he saw her directly before him.

They met, face to face, and each drew back a step, abruptly.

Bertha spoke first. "So you've come back!" she said quietly. Widener felt too many emotions surging within him to trust his voice. He bit his lip and looked down, rejoicing that he had found her, trembling lest he should lose her, sorrowing a little at the plainness of her dress; but, most of all, at the coldness in her face.

"You're not going to—to make any trouble, are you?" she asked.

He looked up, shocked at the question. Trouble?

She spoke again, hurriedly. "Forgive me," she said. "I ought to have known—I did not think. But you must know it is of no use to try the other. We made a great mistake, but I am happy now—happier the way I am than I ever was before." Yet her lip had its quaint droop as she spoke, and it hurt him fearfully to see it. He found his voice.

"Don't speak of mistakes," he begged. "Let's forget it all, and start over again. I know what was wrong. Won't you let me try to make it right?"

"It was not your fault," said Bertha, with averted face. "If I had really loved you, you could never have left me."

"And if I had known what love was," he cried, "you must have loved me!"

Her lip curled, and then drooped, and Widener, watching it, thought he felt his heart stop and go on again. This self-crimination was delicious, but agonizing.

"It's not too late, Bertha," he urged. "We haven't had a fair start. Let's try——"

"Jim!" she exclaimed passionately, "we pretended—you and I—each for ourselves. It was all make-believe, and see what it brought upon us! I'm past pretending! But you—if I could believe——"

"Good God!" he cried, in extremity. "Won't you believe? What can I do, what can I say to make you——?"

Her eyes looked into his for the first time since their meeting. In them she read more than she could think, but she understood, at last.



IMPOSSIBLE

SHE (*triumphantly*)—Mr. Flature says Miss Hiffat looks old enough to be my grandmother.

He (*cruelly*)—How can she?

THE GOLDEN AGE

By Bliss Carman

IN my Golden Age, when the world was as yet all a beautiful, vast, incredible dream, my sister and I used to play together in an old Canadian garden, facing the South.

There were roses there in June. In all the profusion of their old-fashioned varieties, white and crimson and yellow and pale pink, they came to deck the holiday of the year, while the yellow warbler reiterated his hot, keen song from the elm-tree above the hedge. You could gather wonderful collections of the fallen petals from the ground. Sometimes if a rose were very, very full blown and almost ready to fall, you could shake it a little and make the rose leaves drop into your hand. It was no harm to do this, and it was pleasanter than waiting for great Nature, in her deliberate way, to fill the measure of your impatient desire. In Autumn, when the flowers were all gone and the birds departed, the maple-trees would still make a golden light to enhance the glory of the shortening days, and would let their leaves fall very silently down one by one into the grass. They were more durable than the flowers and not less lovely. When Winter came at last, and the volleying snow swirled down from the gray heavens, day after day sometimes, obliterating the beds and paths and making the garden a white wilderness, it never lay too deep for enjoyment. You could always snowshoe across the levels, and dive from the fences and tunnel out Esquimaux houses in the drifts.

There, in the Springtime, when the snows were all melted, except a lingering patch or two, you could gather up the evergreen boughs that had been

used to cover the tulip-beds and rose-bushes through the Winter, and build wigwams of them in the sunniest angle of the house. To these wondrous retreats you could carry your treasures, marbles and gingerbread and apples, and seated there, often in speechless content, lead the adequate life of childhood, without question and without misgiving. Whether we were most often Indians or hunters or royal personages, I do not recall; but I can still smell the odor of the dead spruce leaves; I can see the pale-green shafts of the tulips beginning to thrust themselves up through the breaking ground; I can feel the growing power of the sun, and hear in the still Spring days the small silvery lispings sounds from the remnants of the melting snow bank, as it dripped itself away into the earth, or settled now and then with a sudden crunch of its dissolving mass. The glamor of life was in that time, the unvanquishable zest, the untarnished faith, and we two insignificant mannikins, playing in the sun and creeping under our shelter of boughs, tasted the pride of emperors and lived the pageantry of kings.

All this happened in a world which is still our world, still locked under the clamp of frost, still full of flowers and sunlight and branches of the fir-trees, and in a life which is still our life, still plastic beneath our hands, still alluring to our fancy, still awaiting the accomplishment of our wills and the bringing about of our desires. We lived, you will declare, as children in a dream. But the point is that we made our dream come true. We were only rehearsing, perhaps, for the parts we were

soon to play in the actual drama of the world, and growing somewhat at home on the vast and imposing stage; but at least, we never treated our roles with indifference or scorn. Every hour was so full of satisfaction, that except for a few accidents, with their natural tears, there was not a moment left for sorrow. The spacious present, in that delectable age, was great enough for all our needs, yet not too large for us to fill with the pomps of our imagination and all the absorbing details of our endless doings. We stretched our mimic life to the confines of the airy bubble of the universe. There was in it no vacuity nor sadness, no space for languor nor vacillation nor misgiving, no grim past to haunt the memory with remorse, no spectral future to terrorize the teeming mind. We were too busy to harbor resentments or learn the practice of cajolery and cant, but played our parts with ample dignity, ardor, honesty and vivacity, without self-consciousness or second thought. While then, as now, all times were not alike, time itself was so fully employed we did not even guess that it is a golden opportunity.

How does it fare with me now, when childish values have been discarded and the garments of make-believe long ago folded up and laid aside? I may look back upon the shelter of boughs with an amused and superior regard, just as our kindly elders looked down upon us then, but do I deal any more competently with life, now that I am grown, than I did in those innocent years which seem almost legendary? Can I today make the dream come true? Can I fill the great bubble of the universe full to its rim with satisfaction and gladness? Is the mighty present sufficient for me? And do I play my apportioned role with earnestness, with modesty, with assiduous care?

In the Golden Age every flower was a miracle, every pebble a precious stone. Are they not still as treasurable, as full of beauty, and as deeply touched with inevitable magic? After all these years of studious toil to slake an insatiable curiosity, after all the revelations of science and the sobering effects

of experience, after suffering what we are pleased to call disillusion, is the meaning of the universe any plainer than before? Is its structure any less marvelous, its loveliness any less entralling? Is there, indeed, any such thing as utter disillusion? We allow ourselves to fancy that daily life consists in dealing with commonplace things in a commonsense way; but are we really free from the enchantment of beauty, the sorcery of love, the lure of knowledge? Are we not captivated still by the glory of the earth, and does not the goodly savor of existence still possess us with exuberance of joy?

It seems that we have, each one of us, some secret trail over the impassable mountains of sorrow into the country of the heart's delight. Is not the most worldly of us a dreamer and a visionary at times, cherishing some scheme of good, some plan of life, some project for a blameless enjoyment, to be accomplished one day when he shall have conquered fortune and wrested a little freedom from the hands of inexorable destiny? Does he not front his fellows with a countenance of acerbity and a forbidding air, oftentimes from a foolish shame at the faith still lurking in his heart? One is a connoisseur of paintings, another is a collector of pottery and gems, a third is a lover of poetry and secretly addicted to the muse, a fourth has a passion for first editions or rare bindings or old mahogany, or hand-wrought copper or Blue Belden setters or some other impractical craze, while a fifth clings to the belief that the day will come when he can abandon care and immerse himself in the leisure of a country life—all "hard-headed business men," forsooth, and all tainted with this strain of mortal madness, an imperishable belief in a Golden Age.

Though we look upon the earth with different eyes for the most part now, it is still in our rarer moments the same wonder-work that bewitched our imagination in childhood and bewildered our minds with many conundrums. Upon this stage where we now play the great drama in earnest,

we still may see the shifting scenes of scarlet Autumn, frosty Winter, and the Springtime green of orchards. The variable lights of sun and stars and crescent moon, for laborers and mariners and lovers, still flash forth without mischance or check. The drafty gusts of invisible air from the wings of the East or West still blow across it. Its streets and woods are still muffled with silent snow or drenched with veritable rain, or along its horizon white clouds are billowed over the Summer hills. And still at times above the awed beholder the magic Northern streamers may wave to and fro, like bands of saffron and emerald on the purple dark. The valleys still resound with the clamor of ice-cold brooks in the April night, and the myriads of frogs send up their deafening chorus from marshy places as of old. In June the thrushes come back with their solemn music, calm as time and inevitable as morning. And as the season of the falling leaf draws round, the days are touched with an ethereal pathos and heroic beauty, wherein we move, spellbound by an old illusion and haunted by the ancestral dream of an everlasting October. All this we may perceive with the old astonishment, whenever for a moment we lift our eyes from our all-engrossing labors.

So the child is father of the man, and the Golden Age does not belong to any one time of life. It is a charmed cycle in which childhood perpetually dwells, but its gates are never shut against any mortal in whom a trace of childheartedness still survives. Unless we have lost the power by wilful disuse, we may step back within its borders on the instant, whenever we will, and find ourselves once more in that magic air of happiness, that atmosphere of simplicity and romance. It is a passage more swift than a journey on the flying carpet of the fairy-tale. It needs no transportation of the body, but only the transport of the heart, the elation of the spirit by some fortunate breath of inspiration or happy change of thought. Often a sudden circumstance, or a new idea cast into the mind,

will bring us there all unexpectedly and make us heirs again of those regions of beatitude.

It is easier to reach the dominion of the Golden Age than to float down stream in a log canoe. It requires only resolution to renounce the tyranny of things and set at naught the supremacy of fear. Whoever will do this without compromise, yet without truculence, may enter that charmed existence again for a day or a year or a lifetime, as his courage endures. For many the Golden Age returns in flares of exhilaration, under the sorcery of success or in moments of admiration; some, sad to say, born scoffers and disbelievers and sullen rebels, hardly ever catch a gleam of its blessed sunshine; while a few are so fortunately constituted that they never pass utterly outside its borders in all their lives. To be cruel, to be unforgiving, to be greedy, to be suspicious or censorious or unjust or distracted or mean, above all, to be sour and dispirited, is to make the Golden Age a fable indeed. To be kind, to be gentle, to be generous, to be blameless as a mortal may, to have faith in nature and trust in people, to have belief without credulity, serenity without indolence, and intensity without violence or debasement—these are some of the virtues we must possess, if only for an hour, before we can enjoy that rare state of mind and quality of spirit in which life, often so leaden, seems truly golden, and the irreparable flux of time appears but the unregretted passing of immeasurable content. In such moods of blameless rapture we take on the stainless guise of an immortal childhood, and, purifying our man's estate, attain a little of the poise which seraphs wear.

It is a common frailty of the spirit to deplore our accumulating years and look with envy on the luxuriant carelessness of youth, as if experience and culture and the enrichment of memory were not almost the only true wealth. It is good to be young, but it is better to be wise; for youth is often sad, and wisdom's chief concern, after all, is happiness.

I have known persons, two or three, of so rare a character that time did not seem to touch them as it passed. By some blessed miracle of nature they appeared immune from all deterioration or impairment, undistraught by difficulties, unembittered by distress, unarrested by any calamity or toil. Sorrow could not break their singing spirits, nor misfortune cast them down for long. They had fine balance of disposition, which is the chiefest of blessings. They could be counted upon to confront any enigma of existence with an eager, impartial intelligence, always looking for new truth and always abiding by the truth already found; their instinct for beauty was too keen and too great to suffer either satiety or perversion; and their fund of love too profound to be depleted.

If natural grief came to them or they were overtaken in some irrational disaster, they bowed before the wind of destiny and sorrowed mightily, as great hearts must, but came up again out of the dust, pliant and undestroyed; unshaken in faith as before and lovelier than ever in the gentleness of their regard. You could not guess their years, you could only say they seemed to live by some perennial charm in a state where all evil was incongruous and decrepitude could never come. And with all their maturity of mind, their magnificent qualities of strength and sympathy, there was always about them a touch of the child, a breath of perpetual innocence and wonder, as if they might be immortals in disguise or wanderers from the fabulous Age of Gold.



MY ROSE

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

H EAVY with pink and mignonette,
 The garden's incense at your shrine,
 Throughout the stillness of your room
 The very twilight seems to bloom;
 The evening air is pulsing wine,
 Drugged purple with crushed violet.

Beyond your window, where are wont
 To feed the birds that love you best,
 Afar, amid celestial tides,
 The crescent moon, inviting, rides—
 A silver shallop come to rest
 Upon a silent Hellespont.

Below us—oh, so close that he
 Stands almost here—a nightingale
 Is pleading to his pure white rose.
 Bend nearer. How the music grows!
 Love, can such pleading ever fail?
My rose, what will her answer be?

THE REFORMATION OF BILLY HENDERSON

By Robert McDonald

THERE was no doubt in the world—Billy Henderson's world—that his first wife had died of his habits. She had never been very strong and her handwriting slanted down-hill so conspicuously that she had room for the longest postscript in the triangle at the bottom of the page. There were those who said unkind things: that they, too, might have had temptations along the line of Billy's failings had they been married to Grace. But these were invariably women. Some of them were his relations and others were his contemporaries who had never married anybody.

Men, Billy's friends—practically all of Billy's friends after a time—felt sorry for Mrs. Henderson, and when she called upon them, cheerfully went out and hunted and sobered Billy up; and then looked virtuous and took a maddening proprietary interest in him for weeks afterward. And no man who had once been called in to lead Billy back to the paths of sobriety would ever hold carnival with Billy again, however much he might enjoy himself in other society. As bit by bit he was thus weaned away from the earlier companions of his periodic disappearances he found new ones of the substitute order, and went on down a little deeper, until finally Grace took pneumonia and died. A good many people died of pneumonia that Winter, but everybody said Billy had killed her, and as he was really very fond of his wife, he was heartbroken over her death.

The house they had built was a misery to him, for Billy was very domestic in his tastes between times, and

yet he could not quite stand it to have it torn out and all of the household gods that Grace had spent her days in gathering sold at auction or sent around to her friends. Billy, knowing Grace, felt that she would tearfully beseech St. Peter himself to let her back through the pearly gates if she were to look down and see somebody else using her precious "things." So Billy, full of remorse, kept the house open and thought that he stayed there. Sometimes he did.

It was a lonely life for a man of gregarious disposition. There are people who wear grief and remorse with becomingness. They get lovely violet shadows under their eyes and hollows in their cheeks which show what Du Maurier called "their beautiful bones." We may imagine the late Lord Byron saying with some grace:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruit of love are gone;
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone!"

But not Billy Henderson.

Mr. Henderson was five feet eight, broad in the shoulders, and had crisply curling red hair. The corners of his mouth had an upward tendency that it would have required a surgical operation to correct, and his eyes were blue-gray. Had he quoted poetry it might have been something by Lord Byron, but not that passage. Solitude and an attitude of dejection were so strange to him that the world at large was not at all astonished when the Sunday papers announced his engagement to another woman. But it was a blow to those old friends whose hands had

been held by Grace as she sent them forth to bring him home. On them the news came as a crushing surprise.

A few young men who had appeared at the very end of poor Grace's troubles were particularly bitter. They had had a story to tell which never failed of an effect. Sitting in the dim-shaded lights of tea-tables, their frock coats gracefully disposed, stirring their spoons around and around in their cups, feeling very old and manly and like somebody on the stage, they could tell that tale with a pathos that would almost make a girl cry—a tale of poor, pretty, pale-haired Mrs. Henderson weeping her heart away, calling upon her friends and Billy's friends to save him from himself, and finally wasting away like a flower, leaving her husband a prey to everlasting remorse.

"It is a lesson to us men who went through it all," they would say, sighing heavily. "He broke her heart, and knows it when it is too late."

If it had been another sort of girl that Billy married they might have had material for a sequel that hinted of one drowning grief in madness—but Lucile Black!

Lucile was a cool young woman of twenty-six, very pretty, very athletic, who had graduated at Vassar and taken a post-graduate course in psychology at Columbia. To the objections of her family to her marriage she turned the deafest sort of an ear. It must be confessed that the protests were feeblers than might have been expected. Lucile was an orphan and her male relations thought she was old enough to take care of herself. Besides, there were two or three of them who were old college mates of Billy's and liked him. And then it isn't every girl who is stupid enough to go to college who succeeds in marrying a millionaire who is a good fellow, and reformed at that. Of course he was reformed. His broken heart and his reformation were common topics of conversation wherever the Sunday supplement reaches.

But Lucile was not sufficiently peculiar to lack a few disinterested friends, and these expressed themselves. They

said they could not have a knowledge of her ignorance on their consciences. It was a friend of her mother who went into the painful details that seem to be the especial possession of ancestral friends. Surely, this lady said, Lucile could not know the horrors of intoxication or she would not be braving them.

"Intoxication is an impossible subject," Lucile said with some crispness. "I have never seen an intoxicated man in my life, nor have I any expectation of ever doing so."

"But, my dear child, his habits are well known."

"I am quite sure you are mistaken in thinking that Mr. Henderson has any unpleasant habits," Lucile said, with exasperating calmness. "People tell such extraordinary tales. I saw in the papers only last week that you were very much disappointed because Mr. Henderson had not married Josie, whom you had been trying to settle for years. You see, you cannot believe anything you hear—*anything!*"

It was in this state of mind that Lucile went to the altar, looking so splendid in her bridal white that a good many people wondered for the first time why it had been so long delayed. Billy fairly radiated bliss. If Lucile had any "new woman" idiosyncrasies she evidently had not shown them in his courting time. They went off into honeymoon-land by the Southern route and were momentarily lost to the consciousness of their world.

Billy had his yacht sent ahead and she lay off Naples waiting for them; a trim little craft, not too big, but all white and gold, with deck chairs and awnings and a general air of festivity.

It was the day after they took possession that Lorie, whose duty was the care of the decks, said to Forsyth, Mr. Henderson's valet, that "it certainly was a relief to know that the place wasn't going to be awash with tears this trip."

"I don't know," Forsyth said slowly. "You know they say somewhere, in one of them comic pieces that is always picking up old slang, I guess it was, that you can't put new wine into old bottles

without having some kind of a bust-out. These new ways of Mr. Henderson's is all very well—well indeed, but there is times when I see a look about his eyes as though before long he might be going to give."

"Oh, he's reformed."

"All gentlemen who spree, reform between 'em," Forsyth remarked sententiously.

"Anyhow," Lorie summed up, "this one don't look like the cryin' kind to me!"

It was four weeks later, when the *Au Revoir*, after a cruise among the isles of Greece, again lay in the shadow of Vesuvius, that Billy went ashore and did not come back. They had had a friend or two aboard, and Lucile was a little tired with the constant sense of responsibility. Departing backs looked so pleasant to her that morning that she did not distinguish Billy's as being essentially different from the rest. She declined his invitation to accompany him and settled herself on deck with a tableful of new magazines and the Gifford lectures of Professor William James, just then published.

Once since her marriage—fortunately not before—Lucile had hoped that, added to her husband's many other admirable qualities, he might have a literary sense and be one of those secret readers in which his class abounds; one of the chosen people with a bookish ancestry who have become so identified with the philistines that they eat their bitter herbs of good literature like stolen fruit. She had found on the yacht a copy of a great novel that is written in a cipher quite unintelligible except to advanced pupils in modern fiction. It bore the name of William Henderson on the title page, and there was a leaf turned down as though to mark a particularly abstruse passage. Lucile looked from it to Billy, but he spoke first.

"Oh, you have found that funny thing!" he said pleasantly. "What do you suppose it was printed for? I looked at the words in it up to that place I marked, but I couldn't get on to it."

So Lucile read alone, and like many another woman was pleasantly soothed by the thought that there were some privacies that even matrimony could not invade. There are often courses of conduct that a woman might carry to a successful conclusion if the object of her endeavors was not conversant with the source of her inspiration and did not consequently "know the answer."

If passersby even of her own world had seen Mrs. Henderson lying there in her deck-chair, her eyes going from the printed page to the scene about her, where the waters of the bay were trying to look as blue as the sky, and Vesuvius, by way of doing its duty toward a famous view, was throwing plumes to the wind, little could the mind of man have fathomed her train of thought.

It had its starting point in one of Professor James's illustrations. It was that one about the cube that is lifted from its solid base, hangs for a period on an angle, and then settles on a new plane as solidly as in its first position.

Lucile sent the soft-footed Lorie below for a black book lying on the table in her cabin. She opened it to a heavy-looking chapter headed "Inhibitions." It was quite safe to let it lie around. Billy would never know what it was about; but Lucile thought it most interesting to note the laws of contrast and how one emotion refused, positively refused, to live in the vicinity of another. There was Fear of various sorts, a whole family of Fears, each of which was aggressive enough to drive out and destroy almost any other emotion. It was all so absorbing that the sun was low and the twisted sides of the great volcano turning from red copper to dull bronze in the level rays before she realized that it was almost time to dress for dinner, and Billy had not returned.

It took Mrs. Henderson an unusually long time to dress that evening, and then she disturbed her maid by changing her gown after it was adjusted. She finally ate her solitary meal, under the bland eyes of the servants, in a short white serge skirt and a fascinating lit-

tle blouse; and it must be confessed that her state of solitude did not appear to affect her appetite.

"You may put out the coat to this suit," she had said to her maid. "I may go over in the launch to meet Mr. Henderson." And Caroline had meekly assented.

All afternoon Forsyth's theories concerning the strain on old bottles had been a matter of discussion, and the worst was feared; but Mrs. Henderson finished her dinner and had her coffee on deck under the lamp of the Southern sky with her usual placidity. At half-past nine she made inquiries as to the hour Mr. Henderson had ordered the launch to meet him.

"He didn't say, ma'am," the captain told her. "He most likely thought he would get one of the boatmen inshore to bring him out, ma'am."

"Evidently he did not find a boat. He is probably waiting," Mrs. Henderson said calmly, although it needed only the exercise of one's eyesight to see that there were plenty of boats.

"Yes, ma'am."

"You may have the launch out and I will take Caroline and go in to meet him."

The captain, who had sailed the *Au Revoir* for five years, moistened his lips as though for deliberate speech, thought better of it after he had caught the level eyebeam of Mrs. Henderson, and went about his duties. "Least said, soonest mended," he remarked, by way of excuse to himself.

If anybody imagined that Mrs. Henderson was going to sit on the cushions of a launch and wait the weary hours away, he was mistaken. In a most businesslike way she ordered that one of the jingling little carriages should be brought, she gave a very businesslike address, seated herself by Caroline's trembling side, and rode up through the quiet streets, between the white walls and gardens, until she reached a house which bore the gay shield of the United States of America over the doorway. Taking Caroline with her, she went in and remained

about ten minutes, coming out with a tall, thin young man whose photographs had been industriously sown broadcast by the publishers of a book called "At the Court of the King," which had shown such a thorough knowledge of the manners and usages, ways of finesse and diplomacy, as practised at foreign courts, that a President, thankful at finding such a treasure, had taken him from the Kansas college where he had received his experience and made him a consul.

"I am very much distressed," Lucile said, in a calm even tone that caused Royal Allen Clarkson to make a mental note that it was true then that ladies who had been brought up under the rule of great conventionality could repress all feeling even under the stress of the greatest emotion. "I am Mrs. William Henderson, of New York."

The consul had seen the yacht and he knew the family history of the Hendersons. Lucile sat down in one of the carved chairs which Mr. Clarkson had purchased the first week of landing on these shores, under the impression that they had been a pope's gift in time of the Borgias to a now impoverished noble family. Behind her head was a tapestry with a similar history, which was singular, as modern machinery had not been invented then.

"I shall be only too happy to assist you in any way in my power," the consul said. He was a tall, earnest young man, who blushed when he spoke. He looked at the smart Caroline who stood by the door, and wondered whether he should offer her a seat. He compromised by standing up himself.

"It is my husband who is troubling me," she said, and Mr. Clarkson blushed again.

"He is very, very ill."

Caroline, by the door, started and then faltered as the calm eye of her mistress rested upon her.

"He was with Mr. Roosevelt in Cuba and he has never recovered from the—strenuousness. He must have had a sunstroke when they climbed those

terrible hills, for every touch of sun seems to affect him to fever. He has been very nervous for days"—"so she noticed it, too," Caroline thought—"and I fear that he may have an attack of his delirium and be in danger, as he has not returned to the yacht. I wish to ask you to assist me with your authority. And can you direct me to a good physician?"

"I will come at once," Mr. Clarkson assured her. "And I know a very good physician—an American, too."

"No—please. I can trust you." There was an accent on the end of that sentence that gave the famous author a curious pang at the pit of his stomach. "An American doctor might speak of this and the newspapers exaggerate so terribly. You know, Mr. Allen-Clarkson, how the press invades one's privacy." And the newly hyphenated one nodded a grave and appreciative nod.

"If we could have an Italian physician it would be best. Of course, we—my husband and I—know the course of treatment he should have. We simply want a skilful hand to carry it out and take care of Mr. Henderson. Let it be someone young. I believe in youth."

"There is Dr. Lanti down the street. I know him slightly, but he speaks no English."

"I think we could make him understand. Will you take me to him?"

"My interpreter is away," Mr. Clarkson faltered. He looked among the books on the table and selected a phrase book, and turned to the chapter on "Employing a Physician."

"I speak a little Italian," Lucile said modestly. As a matter of fact, her family had attended to what they considered the essential parts of her education in her earliest youth and she had not been obliged to depend upon the lingual advantages of Poughkeepsie-on-Hudson.

Dr. Lanti was young, good-looking and overwhelmed by his great good fortune in having an American millionaire on his yacht for one of his first patients. Mr. Clarkson delivered

himself of one sentence in Italian. He knew that by heart. It contained the information that he was the representative of the United States of America; that the individual introduced was a citizen of that country and to be treated with according consideration, and, in short, have what she asked for. Mrs. Henderson carried on the rest of the conversation, and Dr. Lanti packed a bag under her directions. He was a little astonished at some of the articles necessary to the treatment of a touch of sun "in the American manner," but he was willing to learn and in no mood for argument with his amazing good fortune.

The doctor was sent to the yacht with a note from Mrs. Henderson, and she and Mr. Clarkson, with Caroline huddled on the little seat at their feet, went jingling in the little open carriage, up between the walls where giant heliotrope hung over and the air was full of the night odors of a blossomy, dirty Italian town, to the hotel where Americans were known to congregate. A lighted court looked like a stage in the black and white of the moonlit street; and, as they came near, it contained a scene that might have been arranged for their benefit, although it was already affording amusement to a cosmopolitan audience.

The group in action at the moment consisted of Mr. William Henderson, somewhat disheveled, with one white trousers leg pushed pretty well up his knee and his double-breasted serge coat flying open, going through what appeared to be calisthenic exercises in his efforts to resist being placed in a carriage that stood in the full flood of light. To Mrs. Henderson's real surprise it was the very respectable Forsyth who was assisting at these very complicated maneuvers in what seemed to be the close embrace of her husband. Now they took a slow waltz movement and now they swayed in gentle rhythm. Evidently under the impression that in a foreign land English was an unknown tongue, Forsyth was advising, admonishing and warning his master in tones audible to the whole

street. He was also relieving his own feelings, sure that he would never be called to account for it.

"Come on, now, sir, we have got to get away from here, sir, very quick, sir. She will be here in no time at all, sir. She didn't look as though she was going to mind half as much as you will, sir. COME ON!"

The last words were tragic with indignant despair, for Mr. Henderson had sat down on the ground with great deliberation and a husky avowal never to arise. His ruffled hair was very red and curly. The clipping of his locks had been his reason for coming ashore, but evidently more important matters had claimed his attention. He looked positively infantile with the ruddy "drake tails" on his forehead, his sailor hat on the back of his head and a smile of innocence irradiating his face. His swimming eyes were so heavy that they closed even as he declared his determination to spend the night in the road.

"Stop," Lucile said, just before they reached the lights. "Mr. Allen-Clarkson, will you have the coachman assist you in putting Mr. Henderson into the carriage? He needs attention at once. He is very ill."

"But—" faltered the author of that book on the higher diplomacy, called, "At the Court of the King," "do you not think that he is just——?"

He was deeply distressed. It seemed to him that he had seen attacks like this in far-away Kansas that had nothing to do with Cuban fevers.

"I think my poor husband's affliction must be misunderstood by the ignorant and vulgar," Mrs. Henderson said with sorrowful dignity. A lady with fat plumes in her hat had stopped with her escort and was expressing the fullest appreciation of Billy's appearance as he sat smiling in the road with his eyes closed and his white shoes out in front of him, a neat blue silk garter visible above one.

"I am sure you will help me."

And he did. They put Mr. Henderson into his carriage, although all at once Forsyth seemed to think that the only thing possible was to take him

into the hotel and put him to bed at once.

"Good-bye, Mr. Allen-Clarkson," Lucile said. "I know you will go into the hotel and explain about my poor husband. I hope to see you again some time." And, leaving the United States consul in the street, her carriage went on, following the one in front where Forsyth supported his inert master.

Billy was in a state of coma by the time the yacht was in sight, and he was taken aboard and put into his bed. It was then that Dr. Lanti descended, and Mrs. Henderson began giving orders.

It was ten o'clock of the morning, thirty-six hours later, that Mr. Henderson came through corridors of bewildered pain back to a troubled consciousness and found himself in his own bed swathed and sick. There was a curtain over the port-hole and the room was dusky. He gave a stifled groan, and a black-clad figure, bonneted in white, arose from his bedside and put a slim, cool hand to his forehead.

"Water!" he gasped. His lips were cracked and his mouth was dry. He tried to move, but there seemed to be a terrible weight on his head and a fearful soreness and weakness all over his body.

"What is the matter?" he asked feebly.

The dim face in the white bonnet seemed to smile and, without speaking, gave him something in a glass with a pointed lip. It was lukewarm and there was not enough of it.

"Forsyth—I want Forsyth," he said. "What is the matter? Am I ill?"

But the sister only smiled and sat down again. He tried to arise, but there seemed to be great bundling weights on his feet. A horror took him. He knew what the matter was now. He had been smashed by an automobile. He had seen friends in just his fix. "Was anybody else hurt?" Of course he was very hazy about it, but he hoped Lucile was safe.

"My wife—*sposo*," he said to the sister. That seemed to sound like the Italian for wife, and anyway the sister brought her. It was with real grati-

tude to the fates that Billy saw that she was all right, cool and tender in her white dress.

"My poor boy!" she comforted. "Are you better?"

"What is the matter?" he asked. "What smashed me?"

"Oh, my dear! you have been dreadfully, terribly ill, but the doctor says you are out of danger now, although it may be some time before you are up again."

"What happened? Was it a machine?"

"No," Lucile told him. "You are just ill. You must not talk now. The doctor will be here presently to dress the blisters."

"Blisters?"

"Oh, my dear Billy, you have no idea how terribly ill you have been! . . . Here he is now." Lucile smiled sweetly and drew the curtain from the port-hole to show young Dr. Lanti how his patient was this morning. It was the accusing face of a very much reduced man, with even now a stomach that was beginning to protest against the morphine that had held it and the brain under a spell for thirty hours, who looked at the bowing young Italian.

"What is the matter with me?" he began as man to man.

"Dr. Lanti speaks no English," Lucile said. "I will translate. You have had a terrible attack of fever and it was necessary in order to save your life, to shave your head, poor dear, and blister it"—Billy put a wild hand to the bandages—"and to put really *heavy* blisters on the bottoms of your feet. The doctor is going to dress your feet now. It will be a little painful, poor darling, but *I* will stay."

"You"—Mr. Henderson's vocabulary evidently contained no word that he thought fitting for the weeping Forsyth—"why in—why did you allow this tomfoolery? Why did you allow that Italian blacksmith to touch me? Don't tell me you were such a fool you didn't know better!"

"Oh, sir, Mrs. Henderson would

listen to nothing, sir. She said I was insulting her, sir, and you, sir, to say you were not dying. She asked me if I thought you would behave so, sir, if you were not in a delirium. She was in a great state, sir."

"How long will it be until I can get out of here? The first thing I will do will be to kick you into a hospital and that fool doctor to death."

"Oh, sir, you will not be able to use your feet, sir, for six weeks, sir," Forsyth faltered.

Mr. Henderson glared at him from his head bandages. "Six weeks! Well, anyhow, you will go at the end of them."

"You do not know Mrs. Henderson when she is anxious, sir. If she had told me to shave my own head I should have had no alternative but to have done it, sir. Mrs. Henderson is one of those ladies who says 'Do,' and it is did. If not by you, by another, sir."

When Mr. Henderson was on deck again, carried there, because it takes soles that have been bitten deep by fly blisters a long time to heal, Mrs. Henderson showed all her accomplishments as a good partner of a man's sorrow. She played cards and talked and found gay little tales to read.

"I am going to give Dr. Lanti one of your scarf-pins," she said one day, suddenly, "as a mark of our appreciation of the skilful way in which he saved your life."

"I think his treatment was a little severe," Billy said meekly. "I prefer the homeopathic school. I always did."

"How ungrateful you are! Oh, my dear, if you could have seen yourself! You were in the very last stages—in a coma. I only wish we could take him to America, but I have had him write down his treatment so that if it ever comes again we shall know exactly what to do."

Mr. Henderson looked at his serious-faced wife and there was for an instant a faint cloud of suspicion in his candid gaze, but it passed.

"I think I am cured," he said drily.

THE MAKING OF A MAN

By Edna Kenton

WHEN young Jimmy Adler took his seat one morning at the assistant city editor's desk a low moan of protest went up all over the city-room. Everybody on the *Probe* staff liked little Durham, whom the *Morning Cry* had just snatched up into a full city editorship. Rawson, city editor of the *Probe*, was too good a man to be displaced, even to keep little Durham on the staff, and so the latter's berth was open for Jimmy Adler. But the force of the comparison between the two men struck the staff hard just at first.

"I thought you had the say-so in that thing!" growled Cory, sporting editor, to his chief and chum, as he and Rawson lunched together at the Bismark, on Randolph street, the first day of young Jimmy Adler's rise in the newspaper world. Cory nodded toward another table where Adler was eating alone.

"You've got it sized up," said Rawson coolly. "What's it to you?"

"Nothin' to me!" asserted Cory, with devout gratitude. "Not till his blamed fresh-headedness slops over onto the proper conduct of the sporting page, and then there'll be merry hell to pay. D'je hear him call Vincent this morning?"

"No," said Rawson in surprise. "It's a cinch Vincent ought to be called, but I'm not man enough, and neither's that brute McKinlock. What did Adler say?"

"Just showed him this morning's *Cry*, and pointed out how his dramatic stuff yesterday had tipped off that open air Shakespeare meet at Onwentsia to

the *Cry* for nothing, and lost it to his own paper. Vincent swore at him for a blithering fool, but he saw all right."

"How'd the kid take the cussing?" asked Rawson keenly.

"Like a clam," said Cory appreciatively. "Turned on Conners and told him to make the sprint of his life on the story he was writing—Conners was biting his nails and staring down the street. And then Nettie put somebody on his wire, and Vincent went off mad clear through."

Rawson laughed, and frowned, and finally spoke.

"I put Jimmy Adler into Durham's place," he said slowly, "because the boy's so damned full of energy that he's liable to bust. He's a cracking reporter, and no newspaper man can ever want a better epitaph, but he'll make a better manager of men if he tries out right. He's raw, and a cursed little brute, but though he makes the men mad, he makes 'em work and work their best. Confound him—called Dirke Vincent the first crack, eh!"

"Oh, well," said Cory easily, "as far as that goes, I never thought it'd be so hard to call Vincent, and God knows he needs it bad enough often enough. But he's got this office bluffed to a stand. Of course we all grant he's the best dramatic critic in town, and he grants it along with us all. All but Jimmy. Jimmy's not blind."

Rawson grinned slightly. Then his face sobered again.

"It's an experiment," he said briefly. "Between us, I don't care personally for Adler—not as he is now. He's not a 'good fellow.' He gets in under the

tent flap lots of times and he's mighty well satisfied with himself at all times."

"He's got an approving conscience and a sour stomach," broke in Cory curtly. "You find that combination every now and then."

"But he's got a bloodhound's nose for news," said Rawson. "He's got the germs of generalship. He's got executive ability. He's got brains if he hasn't got bowels. He lacks a few essentials, but he's got his chance to get those now. There wasn't another man in the office I'd have given it to, and I couldn't think of the right man outside."

"All the same when he gets interested in the sporting page, I'll carry it up higher," vowed Cory reverently.

But for the first few weeks, young Jimmy Adler confined himself strictly to the live news part of the paper. As Rawson had said, the young man was all too full of energy, and he was finding vent for it for the first time. He made several mistakes at first, from the consequences of which Rawson saved him, but he made more successes. He picked winner after winner in stories, from the tips which came into the office through some outsider, or some "cub," or through the City Press service. On his third day, when the office was scarce of men, and Rawson had sneered at there being anything but hysteria in the story of a woman who wandered apathetically into the office, maundering much over her marital wrongs at the hand of one Jans Johansen, Adler said nothing; but he left early, met the woman, met the other woman, and later three others, all of them termagants and shrews, and all of them claiming, plausibly enough, to be the various wives of the same man. He stayed out on the story all night, and on that work made good his reputation for news sense, for the Johansen bigamy case became one of the record cases of the Chicago courts, and the *Probe*, which led the newspaper pack after the fleeing Benedict, was overrun with women in all stages of emotional hysteria, whose husbands were missing, and who felt therefore that Jans

Johansen must belong to each of them. "Adler's wives" became a stock and stale *Probe* joke, but Adler's hundred dollar check from the owner of the *Probe* reconciled him to ridicule, although he was not by nature a young gentleman to whom jokes at his own expense were pleasing.

Young Jimmy Adler knew quite well that Rawson's judgment was questioned when that curt gentleman turned over the assistant city editorship to him. None knows better than the unpopular one his unpopularity. Newspaper men are proverbial spendthrifts, and their openhandedness to their fellow-craftsmen is unquestioned. Adler knew quite well that he did not spend money as freely as his brethren of the city room, and he knew far better than they the good reason why. He stood treat sufficiently often from a somewhat calculating point of view, but he had already gained an unfortunate reputation for closeness, and he made no great effort to live it down. He stood treat for the entire staff on the first day, but beyond that he did not go. He preserved his simple mode of living, and his increase in salary went into his bank as regularly as pay day came around.

Therefore, with his understanding of conditions, he took the congratulations of the city room without warmth. He was over the men there—naturally they would congratulate him. He disposed of the matter with such philosophic logic. Yet he was slightly sore at heart over the perfunctoriness of their gladness. Cold as he was—too cold for so young a man—he was not yet beyond the pale of his early twenties, and praise was pleasant to him.

He hardly realized his soreness for several days, so great was the rush of work. It was not until the fourth day, when he was unfolding the damp pages of the last edition, just spewed forth from the thundering presses down stairs, and was surveying with honest pride his Johansen story, with all its thrills, its guesses, its facts, and its pictures of the alleged deserted wives, nine so far, that he felt a hand descend on his shoulder with a warmth which

had warmed no other congratulatory hand.

"I knew it, Jimmy, I knew it! Didn't I always say it?"

Young Jimmy Adler got up, and shook his guest warmly by the hand, not because he cared a rap for old Fitzgerald, for he did not care for him at all. Once it had been his delight and pride to be seen talking with Fitzgerald, but that pride had left him with his first reporting days. For, during Adler's brilliant rise, old Fitzgerald's feet, weary with twenty-five years of the newspaper treadmill, had been slipping backward. But the warmth in his voice slightly warmed Adler's cool young blood.

"Yes, you did, Fizz," he said. "You did, for a fact."

Old Fizz laughed and pulled up a chair beside the assistant city editor's desk.

"Reckon I don't remember the day you first came into this office," he began. "Green as a cucumber, but hard as nails, Jimmy, hard as nails. McKinlock was city editor then—who'd 'a' thought he'd ever run the whole shebang? Old brute McKinlock—they'll always call him that. He sent you out to cover a golf tournament for your first assignment, and by dogs, Jimmy," the old man laughed ecstatically, "you just naturally didn't see how you were going to double back by noon—forty miles out and back! I told you to telegraph—reckon you'd never thought of the wire for anything but births and deaths! And it was lucky that story reached me, Jimmy, and that I played the links myself, and called up out there to untangle your score! But you were dead game, and even that early, I said, 'you'll do!' Well——"

He stared out of the dirty window. He was still young in years, hardly fifty, but he looked an old, old man. A quarter of a century of driving work and strain had made him decrepit. Those years of work—and drink! He had always drunk moderately. Only of late had he become a slave to the habit. And already he was pay-

ing the full, tormenting penalty. For three years now, as Adler knew, old Fizz had not known where his next week's income would spring from. Once he had been "star" reporter of the town. He had held a city editorship, but he had wearied of desk work, and had asked to go back to the staff. After he began to grow careless with his facts, and to fail altogether now and then on an assignment, he was put at the copy-desk. At last he became reference clerk in the "morgue," and from that small position he went out on the street. Once on the outside he could not get back. He still hung about the various offices, waiting for the small assignments given him in pity. To pass away the time of waiting he would turn over the newspaper files of the day, would compare the various accounts of the same story, would pass judgment thereon to whomever would listen. He had become that saddest of all things, a derelict, glad of the meagerest assignment, gladder still of a loan, by courtesy so called. He passed in and out of offices like a weary ghost of Failure, taking his tiny bits of work with pathetic eagerness, and levying his small tax per week on the salaries of his old-time friends.

The young man looked absently at the haggard face, the eyes sunken above drooping bags of flesh, the pale lips on which lingered the odor of indifferent whisky. He glanced at the trembling hands, and the sight of them affected him strangely. They were still beautiful and perfectly kept; the nails were exquisitely manicured. Old Fizz had always been an esthete. For himself Adler despised the niceties of life, but the sight of those perfectly filed, beautifully polished nails made him wonder for a bad half minute how old Fizz endured it—the slow dropping out of sight in the smothering maelstrom; the lack of money to purchase the very few luxuries he craved. Fitzgerald, the dandy reporter, had always been able to do without the necessities if he might have those luxuries. Now he had neither.

But young Jimmy Adler did not fancy sentimental moments. He had long since decided that sentiment and success are at opposite ends of life's pole. Yet he softened involuntarily as he looked this old failure over. He did not approve of old Fizz's established habit of borrowing, and he was set against the habit of drink. He told himself that any loan he might make would go straight over some bar. And yet he could not help saying:

"How's it going, Fizz? Anything I can do——"

The old man turned eagerly, and then shrank back. "No, no," he said. "I didn't mean that, Jimmy. I just heard it from some of the boys—howdy, Dirke; howdy, Rawson—I just came up to tell you I was glad you'd made good."

But the thrifty Jimmy's hand had gone deep in his pocket. "Here!" he said quickly. "No, take it, Fizz. You've done me many a good turn. Yes, yes, I know, you'll pay me when the tide turns. That's all right. Yes. I'll speak to Rawson about an assignment. Good-bye."

He watched old Fitzgerald amble slowly from the room, stopping to shake hands with Nettie, the capable young woman in charge of the *Probe* switchboard, and with all others who happened to be along the old man's swaying line of march. Already he regretted that ten-dollar loan—gift, rather, for he knew he would never see a penny of it, and ten dollars is always ten dollars. Spilt milk was spilt milk likewise, yet the useless and needless generosity haunted him. Not even that hundred-dollar cheque he received the next day sufficed to soothe him, for old Fizz did not put in an appearance for several days, and Cory reported meeting him in the last stages of a prolonged spree.

But a week later the old derelict wandered in, shaking and pallid and half-ashamed, to claim the assignment Adler had half-promised him. There happened to be nothing to give him, and Adler told him so, briefly, angry because he could not see, unmoved, the

anxious look which crept over old Fizz's face. "I'm sorry," the old fellow murmured. "I was sort of counting on something here this week. I was—sort of—sick last week—and I'm sort of short——"

There was a moment's silence. Adler was frowning over the head to a front-page story. Old Fitzgerald waited, and then turned away. The faint sound of his weary sigh brought Adler from behind the paper.

"Here!" he said sharply, too sharply, considering that he was young enough to be Fitzgerald's son. "If you're hard up, seeing that I can't give you any work this week——"

He handed the old man a dollar and turned angrily toward the copy-table. "Here, you, Wallace!" he cried. "Are we supposed to cover today's news or to lift yesterday's stories from the morning papers! Next time you start an *Evening Probe* head with 'Yesterday's Fire Fatal,' you'll hear— Never mind, Fizz, I'm busy." And he harangued on.

As time went on, more and more did old Fizz become a *Probe* fixture. He hung about Adler till that young man went almost wild with chagrin. The staff joked brutally about Fizz's latest "crush," and Adler, whose sense of humor was not of the keenest, grew to loathe the shambling gait of the old man. Almost every morning, near on to noon, he would lounge in and take a chair near Adler's desk, from where he would address cheerfully casual remarks to the young man, never seeming to notice the curtness or deep silence with which such remarks were received.

One day Adler spoke to Rawson about his annoying trial. "Isn't there some way of stopping it?" he asked savagely. "His very presence is a plea for a quarter or half a dollar—or a dime. He's a beggar, living off his friends. He could do something if he'd brace up and get after it. I've a good mind to tell him so."

Rawson smiled somewhat ruefully. "Fizz is the perfect type of the newspaper man grown old in harness,"

he said. "Not all of us get down so low, but it takes nerve to keep our heads up when old age creeps on. It makes me sore to see young fellows like you start into the cursed grind, Jimmy. We advise against it, and then take hold and help you along. There's nothing Fizz is fit for now. Regular routine, anything he could do, he can't do. What's half a dollar now and then? His fiction of paying it back preserves his self-respect and ours, and as long as he promises that, I can't help lending to him, Jimmy."

Young Adler's face assumed its most righteous curves, an expression which always made his intimates wish to arise and slay him.

"It's a graft that'll get worse with time," he said. "He's fastened on me now, for some reason which only the Lord Almighty knows, and it's the limit. Next time he touches me for a quarter, I'm going to turn him down."

Rawson glanced keenly at the young man. "I wouldn't, Jimmy," he said slowly. "You're of another generation. Fizz's story belongs to the old guard. Perhaps you don't know—"

"Mr. Adler on the wire!" Nettie's shrill voice called across the room, and Adler turned abruptly and became engrossed in the latest bit of scandal from the City Hall.

That day proved to be one of the perverse ones which are sprinkled through a year of average ones. The planned-for story of the day turned out to be no story and was given two sticks on the fourth page instead of two columns on the front page. That occasioned work and woe, and five o'clock of that day found young Jimmy Adler worn and weary; furious too, if the truth must be told. Furious at nothing in particular, but at all things in general.

His eye grew cold as it fell on old Fitzgerald, shambling into the city room. It was late. Most of the men had gone. The very sight of the old man was hateful to Adler by now. The old, blearing eyes were no longer pathetic to him, nor the shabby clothes, nor the trembling hands. He resented the old man's fondness for him, and he was

glad to lay it to ulterior and mean motives in which he could not, in the depths of his heart, make himself really believe. He found himself involuntarily counting up the sums of money which he had poured into this old beggar's groping hands, and the amount amazed him, and made him more furious at himself and with Fitzgerald. He watched old Apple Abigail as she stopped beside Fitzgerald, with her basket of fruits. "Want something today, sir?" Adler heard her ask.

Old Fizz stopped and glanced down. "Why, thanks, Abbie," he said lightly. "Those apples look nice, but I don't believe—" He began to search his pockets.

Young Jimmy Adler watched the frail little Irishwoman as she picked out the glossiest, reddest apple from the top layer. "Here, sir," she said. "Take this, Mr. Fitzgerald—it's that fine. Never mind, sir; another day'll do just as well."

"Then next time, Abbie," said old Fizz. "Thanks. Next time, Abbie. That makes—"

"Oh, you're that particular, sir," said the old apple-woman lightly. "Get along with you, sir. Any time'll do."

Adler had looked upon this sight many times, but never before had it stirred righteous wrath as it did today. He knew Apple Abbie for what she was, the faithful, hard-working old woman who for years had patrolled Newspaper Row with her basket, morning, noon, and midnight. She had seen the rise and fall of many a meteoric star. She had known old Fitzgerald when he was just starting on his briefly splendid career. She had seen his gradual downfall, and she was feeding him from her basket today, when he was penniless, just as she had fed him in those days of glory and triple payments.

"Pah!" said young Jimmy Adler to himself, disgustedly. "No, Abbie. Wait—yes—here!" He took two apples and paid her for four, and felt a distinct accession of wrath as old Fizz ambled slowly in his direction.

"Hello, Jimmy," he said brightly,

and made as if to sit down. The younger man turned abruptly toward the nail where his coat and hat hung, with hardly a muttered greeting.

The old man looked disappointed. "Leaving early tonight, eh?" he said gently. "Well, that's good. It's the late hours that kill." He hesitated a little, and shifted his weight. He glanced about him. The room was thinning rapidly. Cory was still there, and Vincent, and Rawson. One or two of the younger reporters, who did not know enough yet to leave when their work was over, still loafed at the rear of the room.

The old man glanced shrewdly from Cory to Rawson to Adler. His pockets were quite empty, and he had wandered in for another of those "loans" in whose ultimate repayment he still believed. Cory had loaned him a dollar only the night before, and Rawson a dollar the night before that. Adler had been singularly neglectful this past week—oversight, doubtless.

He touched his young friend deprecatingly on the arm. "I say, Jimmy," he said with a gentle little cough. "Over at the *Cry* they disappointed me this week—they'll have something next week sure, but this week I'm out, you see, and a little short. I thought maybe that if you could spare a dollar or two—I'll pay you back next week, you know."

Young Jimmy Adler deliberately planted his hat on his head and drew out his gloves.

"No, you won't, Fizz," he said curtly.

The old man started, and his face went gray. In all these last miserable years, so great was the heart of his little world, so graciously lenient its judgment, this was actually the first rebuff he had ever met with.

"I—I will!" he stammered. "I'll pay my debts when—I've got 'em down—in a book——"

"No, you haven't," repeated young Jimmy Adler firmly. "You haven't any intention of paying up, Fizz—no one knows that better than we who lend, unless it's you who take. You've

gone on till it amounts to simple beggary—money and drinks from us, and apples from Abbie——"

Old Fizz started violently. Red streaks barred his face, as if a hand had struck its livid surface.

"You lie!" he shouted. He shook his fist in Adler's stern young face, and it shook itself in pathetic echoing of his infuriated gesture. Then suddenly he drooped. The sands of life seemed to run swiftly from him. His very clothes hung more loosely upon a shriveling figure. His working lips twisted into a horrible smile.

"Yes," he muttered. "It's God's truth. But you're a nice one to tell me, you big-headed, cold-hearted young brute, when all the rest have kept up the fiction, given me alms as loans. Why—I made you, you cur—gave you your first chance, your first lessons. You'd have climbed without me, because you've got it in you, you cold, hard beast, but I was the one that made you. I dressed your stories. I showed you your mistakes—you never made the same one twice, but it was God's luck you got hold of the man who could point you the right way to tell a fact or make up a lie. And now you've stabbed me—curse you for an impudent—" His voice broke horribly, became almost incoherent. "That's right," he stammered. "I've been begging for two years now—I haven't paid back a cent—I haven't got the debts down at home—I did, but the totals sickened me—I was afraid to keep track any longer—now you've told the truth—I'm a beggar, Jimmy, a beggar—and I owe you many dollars——"

He stood helpless, staring, for a moment, at the small circle that had drawn nearer and nearer about them. Then he shook off Cory's arm, and Rawson's, and cursed Vincent, and they all stood aside, awed, and let him pass. They watched him, until his bent figure had been swallowed up in the gloom of the corridor, and then Rawson turned to young Jimmy Adler, whitest of them all, and pressed him down into his official chair.

"I started to tell you a story this

morning," he said savagely. "Come back here, Cory. You're of the younger generation, too. Dirke, you stay and bear me out."

He leaned against the window, staring down Washington street toward the river and the setting sun. The dense smoke from the west side factories became for the moment a beautiful medium through which the long rays filtered.

"Neither of you younger men remembers," he began slowly, "the time when Fizz first came into his inheritance. It was twelve years ago, after he'd ground for twelve long years before. It came in the heyday of his career, and added to its glory. There's a difference between the man who works because he has to, and the man who does the hardest sort of work because he wants to. Fizz's annual income went up into the many thousands, and he worked like a nailer, and spent it all, salary and income. It was like a golden flood to him, and he spent it unwisely enough, but he was damned generous, Jimmy. I've been paying back these last two years a little of what he spent on me during the seven years that flood of money lasted, and so has Vincent, here—Fizz pulled Vincent out of a bog when Dirke was up to his nose, and tore up Dirke's I. O. U. to his face. Dirke's never paid him the principal, because it'd be gone by Tuesday the week after, but he pays his interest in weekly installments on a debt Fizz forgot ten years ago.

"Now, one of Fizz's extravagances, after his money came to him, was to dine at the old Palmer House, and have a pint of champagne with his dinner. He said that had been his dream of wealth, champagne every night. Almost every night, too, he'd take one of the boys over with him, hardly ever more, because he held dinner was meant for two. And that went on, Jimmy, till some of this Amalgamated Tin Tack deviltry came along and wiped him clean in a night, with not a cent to his name, and a nice seven-year collection of silk pajama habits. He was picked clean as a chicken, and the whole town

mourned. Because, you see, he'd worked like the devil, in spite of his money, because the fever of it and the love of it was in him, like it's in you, Jimmie, and no mortal man can tear it out when it's got possession.

"And so, the night of the big failure, he went to the Palmer House for dinner, from habit, and alone. And when he ordered dinner, he stopped short, and then he said, 'No champagne.' Timmins told me this—he was the waiter Fizz had trained up to the sort of service most men don't get from their butlers. 'No champagne, sir?' says Timmins, and Fizz said it again: 'No champagne.'

"One night, a week later, he talked to Timmins about it. 'It's not that I care for the taste of it so much,' he said—that was a noble lie, poor old chap!—'but it's been a custom so long—people notice it.' He hesitated a bit, and finally it came out. A pale brand of imported ginger ale—he liked to watch the champagne bubbles rise in the stem of the glass—if the ale was served in the same way—

"So Timmins talked to the manager, and the next night Fizz had his ginger ale served champagne style, and the sight of it might deceive the elect. But because of that he must always dine alone. His dinners grew more and more frugal, but until he had to cut out hotel dinners he always had his ale, and he always tipped Timmins. It's been free-lunch counters, mostly, since—except when some one of the fellows stands cheerful treat in memory of those great days of canvas-backs and odorous cheeses, and wines that warm us yet when we stop to think for a moment of them."

Rawson's voice died away. His eyes had not swerved from the tangled wires that netted the street and made a latticed screen for the setting sun. He turned at last, and barely glanced at young Jimmie Adler, sunk heavily in his chair, with his young face gone quite as gray as the man's whose secret shame he had just dragged out to light of day. Cory opened indignant lips, but Rawson cursed him with his eyes,

and walked past the assistant city editor, and out of the room. Adler did not stir, and after a silent moment, Cory and Vincent withdrew slowly, and went downstairs for a bracer. The hour had been a wearing one. They lingered, waiting, in spite of themselves, for Adler, and departed at last, pondering many things.

The assistant city editor sat before his desk until the room grew dusky. The scrubwomen came in, requested him to move, and move again, and he obeyed them, never finding surcease from care. Wherever he looked, and when he shut his eyes, he saw the figure of that once dashing and now bent man, the man whom a hotel manager, and a hotel waiter, and countless men of his profession had shielded and loaned to and lied to—even brave, sturdy Apple Abbie, and today he, the newest comer of them all, had dared to tear away the veil that five years of care and honest love had woven, because he had loaned a little money which he did not expect to see again, and because he felt impelled to pay Apple Abbie twenty cents for two five-cent apples—the final straw.

He groaned once or twice in the darkness, and once a fat scrubwoman asked him if he was sick, and he muttered something that sent her scurrying angrily away, and still sat on.

But at last he got up, and turned on a light. He rummaged for the address book of the staff, and found in it by chance an address of Fitzgerald's. He did not know that it was correct—probably a round-up of the adjacent saloons would bring quicker returns, but it was a starting point, at least.

It was not far away, merely a block or two down Washington street, in an office building whose top floor was given over to hiding-places for the flotsam of the city. He went up in the unclean, creaking elevator to the top floor, and got out. "Nine hundred and nine," the elevator boy told him.

Young Jimmy Adler, with beating heart and contracting throat, strode down the corridor and tapped with his stick at 909. At a husky word he

opened it and stepped into darkness. Had not his eyes grown accustomed in the last hour to twilight shadows he could hardly have detected the outlines of the bent figure, flung across a table, beside an eastern window. For the moon had not yet risen from the tossing lake.

"I daresay you'll think it's too cheeky to stand for," said young Jimmy Adler very early the next morning to his chief. "If it's too much for you, I'll take it up to McKinlock and make him give in. It's the only thing to do, and I've said I'd stand for the salary. I told him it'd have to be small—I can make it ten dollars. And I thought you fellows'd be willing to go on with some dinners and things. I had to be indefinite about the work, but the *Probe's* always got some damned riddle contest or fool discussion by readers, and there's always slews of letters to be read and more to be thrown out unopened. And he might just as well open some that otherwise wouldn't be. Maybe, if he does take a brace, he can do something more responsible, but anyway," young Jimmy Adler straightened his shoulders, "I promised him a job on this paper, and he's got to have it till I can look around for something else. It'll not cost the *Probe* a cent, but he's got to be on the pay-roll. And if you don't like it, you've got yourself to blame for it."

He waited a moment. Rawson continued to jab open his morning mail.

"Shall I take it up to McKinlock?" Adler asked at length.

Rawson looked up. His ugly face was screwed into its most forbidding frown. But behind his eyebrows his eyes were shining. Adler, however, did not get behind the beetling brows.

"No," Rawson growled. "If it needs talking over, I'll do the talking. You pitched in fairly deep, and you can't let the paper in for every fool thing, you know. But, considering——"

Rawson's jaws snapped together.

"I'll make out his pay slip for ten dollars," he said. "It can go on till you're tired. If he does extra work, the paper'll pay him extra. There's a

bare chance he'll brace up. There's a lot more chance he'll be a dead weight. This is your business, though."

"I think you'll find—" the young man began. But he stopped. The memory of those moonlit hours last night made them too sacred for blunt revealing here and now.

"Very well. Thank you, sir," he finished stiffly, and went back to his desk. He glanced at the clock. He had told the old man to come at nine. He wondered about Rawson, who had been so cursedly weepy the day before, and was so cursedly grouchy this morning.

But Rawson, crouched like a tiger

over his mail, was swearing softly to himself from a vocabulary rich and various. "I can pick 'em," was the burden of his cry. "The cub's trying out sweet and gingery."

He wheeled about suddenly, and nodded to old Fitzgerald, who had paused uncertainly beside him. "Adler'll fix you up," said Rawson. "I've got to go see Harris."

And for no reason whatever, save one which no power could make him own, he got up from his embarrassingly near-by desk, and went out to the composing-room, leaving Jimmy Adler to "fix it up."



THE CHILDREN

By Theodosia Garrison

MOTHER of many children I—sprung of my heart and my brain—
And some have been borne in gladness and some have been borne in pain,
But one has gone singing from out my door
Never to come again.

Content and Ease and Comfort—they abide with me day by day;
They smooth my couch and place my chair as dutiful children may,
And Success and Power, my strong-limbed sons,
Stand ever to clear my way.

And these be the prudent children, the careful children and wise;
There was one and only one with a reckless dream in his eyes.
He who was one with the wind o' the dawn,
And kin to the wood and the skies.

Faithful and fond are my children and they tend me well, in sooth;
Success and Content and Power, good proof is mine of their truth,
But the name of him that I lost was Joy,
Yea, my first-born Joy of Youth.

Well do my children guard me, jealous of this their right;
Carefully, soberly, ever by daylight and candlelight,
But oh, for my prodigal Joy of Youth
Somewhere out in the night!

DEUX MÉNAGES

Par Henri Lavedan

MADAME D'OURCY, vingt-sept ans.
MADAME VERDET, vingi-six ans.
Au château de Frézolle (Loiret), chez
Mme d'Ourcy.
Elle est seule, sur la terrasse, un bel
après-midi d'automne.

DOMINIQUE, *le valet de chambre*
venant à elle.—Madame, c'est
une dame qui vient d'arriver
en automobile, qui n'a pas voulu dire
son nom. Elle m'a suivi malgré moi.

A ce moment Mme Verdet paraît derrière
Dominique. Elle est en tenue d'auto, un
masque à lunettes sur le visage.

MADAME VERDET.—Me reconnais-tu?

MADAME D'OURCY, *un peu interloquée.*
Non . . . Qui êtes-vous, madame?

MADAME VERDET, *riant.*—Tu es intri-
guée? Cherche bien! Allons!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Je connais cette
voix.

MADAME VERDET.—J'ai pitié de toi.

Elle retire son masque.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Blanche Verdet!
Toi, chérie! Oh!

MADAME VERDET.—Oui, Jeanneton!
Elles s'embrassent.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Je crois bien que
c'est la première fois que nous nous re-
voyons depuis notre sortie du couvent,
hein?

MADAME VERDET.—Oui. Ca fait . .
ça fait? . . . Compte sur tes petits
doigts?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Neuf ans!

MADAME VERDET.—Nom d'une cor-
nette! Déjà!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Nous nous étions
promis de nous voir souvent. . . La
vie nous a séparées. . . Nous nous
sommes écrit six mois cependant? . . .

MADAME VERDET.—Puis, plouf!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Tu t'es mariée,
en province.

MADAME VERDET.—Toi, à Paris.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Au moment de
ton mariage, j'étais en voyage au Caire.

MADAME VERDET.—Au moment du
tien, j'étais au lit, très malade. Ca va
mieux. Et puis, voilà comme on se
quitte! Heureusement qu'on se re-
trouve! Tu sais que nous habitons le
Midi, aux environs de Toulouse? Nous
en sommes partis, hier soir, Paul et
moi—Paul, c'est mon époux—histoire
de nous offrir une jolie promenade, la
nuit, au clair de lune. . . Et puis, il
avait des achats à faire à Orléans. En
arrivant ce matin dans la ville de
Jeanne d'Arc, j'entends prononcer ton
nom chez le pâtissier. . . je m'informe,
on me dit que tu es châtelaine de la
Frézolle, à une heure de voiture, que je
t'y trouverai sûrement, qu'on t'a en-
voyé, pas plus tard qu'hier, un pâté
d'alouettes de P'thiviers et deux boîtes
de cotignac! Alors, j'ai laissé Paul à
ses courses et je me suis jetée ici en deux
tours de roue, avec la Brute.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Avec qui?

MADAME VERDET.—C'est notre ma-
chine, mon Léviathan rose, mon phoqu
en or, ma petite fille, mon grognon
sauvage! . . .

MADAME D'OURCY.—C'est vrai. . .
j'oubliais. Toi aussi, tu fais de ça!

MADAME VERDET.—Pas mal. Et
toi!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Jamais!

MADAME VERDET.—Tu es malade?
C'est le médecin qui t'a. . .

MADAME D'OURCY.—Pas du tout.

MADAME VERDET.—Tu as peur?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Non plus.

MADAME VERDET.—Alors ? Ah ! j'y suis ! Pauvre totote ! M. d'Ourcy est un réac, un type de vieille et haute école, un fossile du Concours hippique, "le dernier chevalier du cheval" qui se cramponne aux rênes et qui nous abomine en regrettant de ne pouvoir nous crever la tête à coups de revolver ? Est-ce ça ? . . .

MADAME D'OURCY.—Au contraire ! il est comme vous tous . . . il raffole de ce sport !

MADAME VERDET.—En ce cas, pour quoi ne le pratiques-tu pas aussi ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Parce que je-le-hais !

MADAME VERDET.—L'auto, ou ton mari ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—L'auto.

MADAME VERDET.—La raison ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Parce que c'est de lui que m'est venu tout mon malheur. C'est l'auto qui a brisé ma vie, qui a passé dessus en beuglant et qui continue à m'écraser le cœur tous les jours, tous les jours . . . sans parvenir, hélas ! à l'empêcher de battre !

MADAME VERDET.—Ca prouve que tu l'as solide ! Qu'est-ce qu'il y a ? Voyons ? (*Se rapprochant affectueusement.*) Raconte, chérie, comme autrefois, quand nous nous disions tous nos petits secrets de fillettes, en nous tenant la taille, sous les charmillles ? Etions-nous assez chaise-de-poste et beau-jeune-homme-pâle, hein ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Ah ! oui ! dans ce temps-là . . .

MADAME VERDET.—T'amollis pas . . . Et dis tout ce qu'il y a de cassé . . . que je voie si on peut raccommo-der. Qu'est-ce qu'elle t'a fait, cette sale machine ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—J'étais très heureuse, quand, après deux ans de mariage . . .

MADAME VERDET.— . . . Et pas d'enfant ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Non. Malheureusement . . . Un beau matin, mon mari s'est mis en tête d'avoir une automobile . . . Une passion spontanée . . . le coup de foudre ! Je m'y suis opposée d'abord de toutes mes forces . . .

MADAME VERDET . . . Première faute.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Attends. Et puis, j'ai cédé.

MADAME VERDET.—Deuxième faute.

MADAME D'OURCY.—De ce jour-là, ç'a été fini. Plus de foyer, ma chère, plus de vie à deux, plus de bonnes soirées . . .

MADAME VERDET.—Plus de causeries au coin du feu, parbleu ! Va ton train.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Gustave est devenu un autre homme, un homme-pétrole. Il a perdu le goût de tout ce qu'il aimait auparavant, les bibelots, l'art, la lecture, la rêverie . . .

MADAME VERDET.—Bigrette ! je l'espère bien ! Faut pas chercher une rime quand on a la main sur le volant !

MADAME D'OURCY.—Et il s'est mis à courir les grandes routes.

MADAME VERDET.—Qu'as-tu fait pour le retenir ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Rien. Comment veux-tu ramener quelqu'un qui se sauve si vite et si loin ? Je pensais d'abord que cette furie lui passerait . . .

MADAME VERDET . . . Ah ! ouatte !

MADAME D'OURCY.— . . . qu'au bout de deux ou trois cents lieues, il s'ennuierait de moi, qu'il me reviendrait. Allons donc ! non seulement il ne m'est pas revenu mais . . .

MADAME VERDET.—Quoi ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Il s'en est allé ailleurs.

MADAME VERDET.—Il t'a trompée ?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Mais oui. Timidement d'abord, en prenant des précautions. Et puis maintenant, il ne se gêne plus. Il a des maîtresses échelonnées à trois, quatre, cinq cents kilomètres l'une de l'autre.

MADAME VERDET.—Comme des relais.

MADAME D'OURCY.—C'est si com- mode, l'adultère, à présent, grâce à l'au- to ! On file où on veut, on emmène sa bonne amie, on est masqué, on loge à la nuit, dans les auberges . . . Impossible d'être pincés . . . Pendant ce temps-là, la pauvre imbécile de légitime reste seule dans sa chambre à attendre le re- tour de son seigneur qui lui expédie, par-ci par-là, une petite postale sur la- quelle il a gribouillé, pendant que la maîtresse lit en souriant par-dessus son

épaule: "Route comme un parquet, pneus épatants. Tout à toi."

MADAME VERDET.—Mais il finit bien par revenir?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Naturellement! Quand il est fatigué... que la machine, ou lui, a besoin de réparations. Sais-tu comment il appelle la maison? Le garage. Alors, il me raconte ses trajets en mentant, avec trop de détails. Quand on brosse ses pelisses, on ramène des cheveux de femme qui ne sont pas tombés de ma tête.

MADAME VERDET.—Que lui dis-tu?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Rien. Je fais semblant de le croire, mais il n'est pas dupe. Si je me risque à lui avouer que je trouve le temps long, il me réplique: "Fais de la toilette, ça te distraira. Je paierai."

MADAME VERDET.—C'est lui qui a la fortune?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Non, c'est moi.

MADAME VERDET.—Et... l'amour? Où ça en est-il?

MADAME D'OURCY.—A ses apparitions, il me fait l'aumône.

MADAME VERDET.—Sans que tu menties?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Sans. Je te prie de le croire. Au point où nous en sommes, je préférerais même qu'il s'abstint de cette charité. Alors, au bout de quatre à cinq jours, il me dit le soir en me plantant un baiser sur le front: "Mon petit, je te fais mes adieux déchirants tout de suite, pour ne pas te réveiller à l'aube, parce que je déballe demain matin, à cinq heures. Ne sois pas inquiète. Je ne te demande pas de venir avec moi, je sais que ça t'embête." Je lui réponds: "Non. Mais je te gênerais." Et il refile. Ajoute qu'il a pour chauffeur un sacripant d'une adresse et d'un courage à toute épreuve qui lui est dévoué comme un dogue, qui l'assiste dans toutes ses escapades et qui me déteste. Mais Gustave l'adore, il a fait de cet homme son compagnon de tous les virages, son camarade de route, et si je lui mettais le marché à la main à choisir entre Grüllmann—c'est le nom de l'acolyte—et moi, je crois qu'il n'hésiterait pas et qu'il choisirait Grüllmann!

MADAME VERDET.—Tu exagères!

MADAME D'OURCY.—En dehors de cela, je ne manque de rien à la Frézolle, aussi bien qu'à Paris où c'est même chose. Tant que je ne me révolterai pas, ça marchera. Mal... mais ça marchera. Maintenant, réponds? Est-ce une vie? T'étonnes-tu si je hais l'auto?

MADAME VERDET.—Mon chéri, tout ce que tu viens de me raconter me fait beaucoup, beaucoup de pienne, Mais c'est ta faute.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Oh! c'est trop f...!

MADAME VERDET.—Ne m'interromps pas. Tu vas savoir mon histoire. Elle est identique à la tienne, en lui étant diamétralement opposée. Je m'explique. Les premiers temps de mon mariage, je n'étais qu'à demi contente. J'avais tout de suite pressenti chez Paul un homme volage, capricieux, ami de la fête dans tous les mondes, impossible à fixer. Je voyais à brève échéance mon bonheur perdu, ma vie gâchée. J'aimais mon mari, j'étais jalouse, je ne voulais lui montrer aucune de ces deux faiblesses. Comment faire pour le garder à moi? rien qu'à moi? C'est alors qu'un certain soir, à ses propres côtés, sur l'oreiller, j'eus une idée géniale: l'auto! Ah! s'il pouvait se passionner pour l'auto, s'y livrer avec la fougue qu'il apportait à toutes choses, nous étions sauvés! En effet, je l'accompagnerais, je ne le quitterais plus, nous serions ensemble désormais jour et nuit. Adieu les tentations de boudoir et les aguichements des petits théâtres! Je le tiendrais!... Note que je n'étais pas sans mérite, car j'avais de ce genre de grosse plaisanterie une effroyable peur et un profond dégoût. Mais, d'abord, que de difficultés! Il fallait, en premier, bien inculquer à mon mari cette idée de l'auto, qu'elle vînt de lui seul, qu'il le crût, et c'était fort compliqué, car il n'aimait rien tant que Paris, et la nécessité de s'en éloigner parfois, ne fût-ce que quarante-huit heures, en dehors des mois d'été, lui était tout ce qu'il y a de plus désagréable. Je rusai, je travaillai; j'y mis près d'un an. Enfin, il acheta

une machine—une petite, pour commencer. Je domptai ma terreur qu'il ne soupçonna jamais et qui, d'ailleurs, au bout de huit jours m'avait passé; je transformai complètement mon genre, ma nature, mes habitudes. Par amour, j'arrivai bientôt à aimer ce que je n'aimais pas. Je fus vraiment—je peux te le confesser à toi—une épouse vaillante et opiniâtre, oui.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Et lui?

MADAME VERDET.—Il mordait, le cher ami! Il mordait chaque jour de plus en plus! Je lui disais: "C'est trop! Nous devenons des sauvages, nous avons rompu avec la moitié de nos relations mondaines. Enrayons! Enrayons!"

MADAME D'OURCY.—Qu'est-ce qu'il te répondait?

MADAME VERDET.—Zut! Et il augmentait la vitesse. Que te dirai-je? Mon rêve délicieux et inespéré se réalisait. J'avais reconquis mon mari et nous filions—à d'incroyables allures—le parfait bonheur.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Et ça s'est maintenu ce beau fixe?

MADAME VERDET.—Voilà six ans qu'il dure. Aussi j'adore l'automobilisme, je le bénis, je le chante! Je lui chante! Je lui dois tout. Sans compter que nous couvrons une existence—je m'en suis aperçue depuis—autrement intelligente, relevée et féconde en saines émotions que celle d'autrefois. Avant, je pensais vivre... je végétais, je pourrissais. Nous respirons à présent de l'air propre et pur, nos yeux extasiés s'emplissent de spectacles et de beautés qui passent les attraits de tous les boudoirs. Je ne change pas de toilette cinq fois par jour. Gustave ne va pas au cercle taquiner le carton, il ne perd plus et j'y gagne. Et puis nous voyageons, nous apprenons, nous connaissons notre pays, cette France provinciale admirable que l'on ignore et méprise un peu à Paris, et surtout nous nous connaissons enfin nous-mêmes, mon mari et moi. Jusque-là, nous cohabitons, mais nous n'avions qu'une intimité d'étrangers, presque d'ennemis. Maintenant nous nous estimons, nous nous aimons.

MADAME D'OURCY.—C'est bon. Assez. N'étales pas.

MADAME VERDET.—Es-tu jalouse de ma joie?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Non. Pardonne-moi. Je suis aigrie.

MADAME VERDET.—Ecoute. Tiens-tu à ce que ta situation change? Tu prétends que l'auto est le mal? Moi, je soutiens que c'est le remède. Accompagne ton mari. La femme doit le suivre, d'ailleurs.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Il ne voudra pas de moi.

MADAME VERDET.—Allons donc! Monte carrément sur la machine un matin, à côté de lui. Installe-toi dans le baquet, et tu verras bien? De deux choses l'une: ou il t'acceptera, et alors c'est fini, tu l'auras perpétuellement à toi, en ta puissance, ou il renoncera à l'auto, ne pouvant plus en faire seul, et ça sera encore, dans ta détresse, un demi-succès? Mais non, cela n'arrivera pas, car, une fois qu'on s'est donné à cette exaltante et noble passion, c'est pour la vie. Tu hésites? Tu ne dis pas non? Bravo!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Mais y songes-tu? Tout couper derrière soi... relations, amitiés...

MADAME VERDET.—Il faut choisir. Et puis, tu constateras comme c'est une privation salutaire et hygiénique pour le moral. On a toujours trop d'amis. Nous mourons de la crampe des poignées de main.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Mais...

MADAME VERDET.—Quoi encore?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Si... l'enfant vient?

MADAME VERDET.—Le bébé?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Oui, comment faire?

MADAME VERDET.—Comme nous. Nous en avons un.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Toi?

MADAME VERDET.—Oui. (*Riant.*) Je te raconterai plus tard. Un accident de cylindre nous a immobilisés toute une nuit, il y a quatre ans, dans une auberge, en pleine Forêt-Noire. J'avais peur... Paul m'a rassurée tellement que... oui, de là Raymonde ou: l'enfant de la panne.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Ou est-il?

MADAME VERDET.—Pour l'instant, chez mes parents. Mais, quand nous ne faisons pas de grands parcours, nous l'emmenons. Tout le temps que je l'ai nourri, il l'a passé avec nous sur Cocotte, celle que nous avions avant la Brute, et je t'assure que ça ne l'empêchait pas de téter et qu'une fois le bidon d'essence entre ses menottes, il pompait ferme!

MADAME D'OURCY.—Comme tout ça est drôle!

MADAME VERDET.—Oui, la vie n'est plus ce qu'elle était sous le bouillant Louis-Philippe, c'est certain. Alors, tu acceptes?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Encore faut-il que mon mari soit revenu?

MADAME VERDET.—Quand l'attends-tu?

MADAME D'OURCY.—Demain.

MADAME VERDET.—Parfait. Je t'enlève aujourd'hui. Merveilleux début. Quand ton loyal surgira demain en demandant: "Où donc est madame?" tes gens lui répondront, comme si tu étais au potager: "Madame est à Toulouse, monsieur, où elle est allée goûter avec des amis, en auto." Tête du dit.

MADAME D'OURCY.—Mais, ma chérie...

MADAME VERDET.—Tu as dix minutes pour faire ton sac.

MADAME D'OURCY, *éclatant de rire*.—Je t'obéis... C'est fou!

MADAME VERDET.—La sagesse. Hop!

Elle allume une cigarette. Mme d'Ourcy sort subjugée.



THE SOLACE

By Charlotte Becker

LOVE made himself a garden
Of flowers his fancy chose—
The lily and the larkspur,
The poppy and the rose.

But, when each fragrant beauty
Had blossomed for a day,
Time took the withered petals
And flung them far away.

The Summer passed, and lonely
Where once their perfume crept,
Within his empty garden
Love laid him down and slept.

Then, in the drowsy silence,
Another blossom grew,
And budded into sweetness
'Twixt darkness and the dew.

And Love awoke, and marveled
In glad surprise, to see
Held fast within his keeping—
A sprig of rosemary!

THE UNTIMELY FATE OF LORD REGINALD

By E. J. Rath

NUMBER 59, at the notion counter, was incensed at 148, and justly, it must be admitted.

"You know as well as me, 148," she snapped, "that if I'd wanted to go to that ball, I'd 'a' gone. It wasn't for lack of no bid."

"Well, what did keep you?" persisted 148—in private life and to her friends, Estelle.

"I had some writin' to do," said 59, with dignity, straightening herself with a little wriggle and feeling of her belt.

"Writin' letters to stay home from a ball?" pursued Estelle, incredulous to an annoying degree.

"I wasn't writin' letters, Estelle Murphy, if you wanten know so bad," retorted 59.

"What in the world *was* you writin' then?" demanded 148.

"I was writin' the sixth and seventh chapters," remarked 59, indifferently.

"Chapters?" echoed Estelle, raising her eyebrows. "What chapters?"

"Estelle," said 59 pityingly, "you're awful new; do you know that, dear? I said the sixth and seventh chapters. Now, what d'you s'pose I'm writin'? A dictionary? Nix. It's a novel."

"May McChesney!" Estelle dropped half a dozen pieces of braid and gasped. Then she said, "May McChesney," again, and followed it with "Oo-o-o-o!"

"Anything funny hit you?" asked May, sniffing.

"Oh, May," said Estelle, "I ain't laughin'. I think it's grand. I—I never thought it was in you, May. I'm dyin' to hear all about it."

"I hadn't intended to tell you till it was published," said May, mollified, "and I wouldn't now, if you didn't

happen to be a *very* personal friend. If you'll keep it on the dead, I'll tell you some of it. Of course, it was bound to come out some time, anyhow; but I don't want nobody nosin' in till it's ready. You understand how it is about such things, Estelle."

"Sure," said Estelle, enthusiastically. "Now, tell us about it, May."

"Well, it's a society romance," said May, and she paused, while Estelle grasped the significance and squeaked with approval.

"It's about English nobility and royalty," continued May, dropping her voice as the floorwalker passed. "I don't want him buttin' in," she explained with a jerk of her finger. "I've wrote steady for three nights, now, and I've got seven chapters done. The hero is a lord."

"Oh, May," whispered Estelle, "but that's one grand idea."

"I kinder thought you'd like it," said May. "Well, he's a lord, and his name is Lord Reginald Montmorency, and he has landed estates. What's them? Oh, it's property that nobility owns. They all have 'em. First I didn't know but I'd call him Lord Algernon, but then I decided that Montmorency sounded a little sweller. Hey? Yes; I thought you'd say so, too. And the heroine is named Gwendolyn De Carteret. She works in a store."

"With that name?" gasped Estelle.

"She's from an old and noble family, but downtrod," said May, ignoring the interruption. "Her folks has died and she's earnin' her livin'—a good deal like us girls, Estelle. Sometimes I almost cry when I get to thinkin' how noble she is in all her sufferin'."

"Who's she look like?" demanded Estelle.

"I kinder made her up," said May, "from different ones in the store. She's a blond, with a grand figure, and she's a swell dresser. She's got your eyes, Estelle—honest, dear, I always liked your eyes—and 162's hair, although she does hers in a Marcel, and—well, her figure's somewhat like mine. I ain't stuck on myself, you know; but she had to have some kind of a shape, and the best novelists always draws their characters from life. Didn't you know that? Oh, yes; why, Marie Corcelli—I think it was—described some of her most *personal* friends; of course not usin' their names. But that's the way the best literature is wrote."

"But how does Lord What's-His-Name meet her, if she works in a store?" said Estelle.

"Well, you see, it's in London," said May, "and of course *very* swell parties go to them London stores. They meet right in the store, at the lace counter, where she works. Say, do you wanten know how I got that idea? Listen. Remember the day that actor playin' down at the Grand come in here? Well, I'd seen him only the night before. Wasn't that a coincidence? It struck me *very* strange. He took off the part of an English earl in the play, and, Estelle, he was the grandest thing I ever saw on the stage. The actorine who played the heroine in the play was with him. Isn't it strange how them women look handsome on the stage? They come straight up to my counter. I don't know whether he seen me in the audience, or what it was, but he gave me *one* look, and I wanted to faint—it seemed so personal, you know. Then him and her got to talkin' about laces, and say, Estelle, he talks off the stage just the same as he does on it. He'd make a grand singer, that man; he's got one of them voices that thrills you right through. I almost got embarrassed, and you know, I ain't a mark for everything that comes along in good clothes. That'll give you an idea of the way he looked at me. And

when they left he took off his hat and said, 'Thank you.' To me! You oughter seen the look she give him! My, but that man knows how to take off his hat. Makes you feel—well, sorter like you was ace. See? I got the idea of Lord Montmorency from him.

"The hero really *is* him, Estelle; but I'd die if he ever found it out, although I suppose he'll have to know some day, when he reads it. Lord Montmorency comes into this store in London with a lady. I made her up after the actorine, because I didn't care much for her, or the way she spoke. She's terribly in love with him, but he don't care nothin' for her; only she's got a hold on him through his sister, the Lady Alice, who used to go to school with her, and who done something that wasn't very nice; and this woman seen her do it and is holdin' it over her. He, bein' noble, is protectin' his sister's name. Of course, I don't tell what the sister really done—not yet, anyhow, although it'll come out near the end that it wasn't nothin' much, after all. All the best novels keeps you guessin' about them things, and that's the way I done it. This woman that's got the hold on him is Mrs. Harold Daingerfield—it's spelled with an 'i'—and she wears a red princess dress and she's a widow. By and bye it'll appear that she killed her husband, so's to get a chance at Lord Montmorency; but I'm savin' that for near the end.

"Well, Lord Montmorency and this woman comes over to the lace counter and Gwendolyn De Carteret waits on them. Lord Montmorency falls in love with her and he's very polite, and Mrs. Daingerfield knows it, and makes up her mind that the first chance she'll kill Gwendolyn. I think that part of the plot is goin' to be very effective. Wait'll I wait on this customer, Estelle."

An interval, during which Estelle fidgets expectantly.

"Well, as I said," continued May, "she hates Gwendolyn and makes her take down everything on the shelves, till she's 'most dead. And then she don't

buy nothin'. You know the way some are, Estelle. By the way, I *was* goin' to name Gwendolyn after you, but I didn't like to take the liberty. What? Well, honest, Estelle, it's too late to change it now, but maybe I'll put you in somewhere else. But Lord Montmorency, feelin' sorry for Gwendolyn and lovin' her so much, says he's goin' to buy some laces for his sister, and he buys the most valuable pieces in the store, and Mrs. Daingerfield is turnin' green all the time, but she can't say nothin' in the store, of course. Then he takes out a fountain pen and writes a cheque for it and hands it to Gwendolyn, who blushes, and he takes off his hat and bows—just like the actor bowed the day he was in here. It must be grand to be bowed to by a lord. As he goes out with Mrs. Daingerfield he turns back and gives Gwendolyn a look—no, I don't know whether the actor did or not, smarty, because I wasn't rubberin'—and Gwendolyn smiles a little bit—'a shadow of a smile' it's called in the book. And after he's went she finds his fountain pen lyin' on the counter with the cheque, and she slips it in her waist—the pen—and keeps it. If it'd been anyone else's she'd have turned it in, but she just couldn't, with his pen, after the look he gave her.

"Next time they meet it's at a ball."

"A ball!" exclaimed Estelle. "Do them lords go to balls?"

"Why, Estelle Murphy! They go everywhere they want to. This is a swell ball, and, anyhow, it's a nice place for them to meet. It's in the conservatory, under a palm-tree, and they both start and draw back. I'll admit I got some of the main ideas of that outer the play, but the rest I made up. He doesn't know her name, but she knows his, havin' read it off the cheque, but she doesn't know he's a lord, because he don't use his title in business matters. So he takes off his hat and bows."

"His hat!" exclaimed Estelle. "Does he wear it at a ball?"

"Oh, I clean forgot that," said May.

"Well, I can change that easy. Any-

how, he can bow without his hat, can't he? Well, she gets confused and, bein' a gentleman as well as nobility—you know some of them ain't, Estelle—he goes and gets her an ice. That's all right, because now they've met twice. When he comes back with the ice she's cryin' and he just stands there, longin' to take her in his arms, but he dassent. Then she tells him she's got his fountain pen and she's afraid he'll think she stole it, and she tries to hand it to him; but he won't take it and says she must keep it for his sake. That scene where he tells her to keep it is awful romantic, Estelle; you'd want'er cry.

"Well, just then Mrs. Daingerfield comes in from the other end of the conservatory; and she thinks it's a date, and she's wild with jealousy and hisses, 'Lord Montmorency, who is this woman?' That's the first Gwendolyn knows he's a lord and she almost drops dead. Then Mrs. Daingerfield tries to stab her with a silver dagger that has a jeweled handle—the one she killed her husband with, and which she always carries with her, concealed in her corsage—and Lord Montmorency stays her hand and says, 'Would you do murder?' Then Gwendolyn faints right into his arms—no, not a-purpose, you mean thing—and Mrs. Daingerfield goes out in a rage, sayin' he'll rue the day. Then Lord Montmorency calls a cab and sees Gwendolyn home, and when he finds out she's just a poor girl he's more in love with her than ever, and he wants to marry her. But Gwendolyn thinks he only pities her, and what she wants is his love, so she tells him it can never be. It was hard to write that, Estelle, but I couldn't spoil the book. So he bids her good night, very formal and noble, and when she goes up to her room she finds she's still got the fountain pen, and she puts it under her pillow and dreams about him. I think that's kinder sweet and romantic, don't you, Estelle?"

"It's the grandest ever, May," said Estelle, in a hushed voice. "I don't see how you ever done it. Where do they meet next?"

"At the races," said May. "Of

course, Gwendolyn is not playin' the races; but her brother is, and she's tryin' to save him from gamblin', which was what ruined her father and made her mother die sorrowful and poor. She's wearin' a *very* effective tailor-made gown, which shows her figure. Lord Montmorency meets her in the bettin' ring, where she's lookin' for her brother, and he thinks that she's there to gamble, too, so he looks at her coldly and bows very stiff. She sees right away what he thinks, and what do you suppose she does, Estelle? She raises her head, proud, and cuts him *dead*. Him a lord, remember. Then she passes out, haughty, but with a breakin' heart—that's the way it is in the book; and just as she gets to the entrance, him follerin' as close as he dast, she bunks into a grand lookin' woman that's comin' in. Here's what happens, the way I've got it wrote:

"Gwendolyn De Carteret drew back, startled, and then said, 'Your pardon, lady, I had not seen you.' The majestic woman drew herself up, and, with one withering glance, drew back a jeweled hand and struck the gentle heroine with her gloves, full across the fair face, and swept on. Gwendolyn De Carteret staggered for a moment, but then recovered herself, although her soft cheek was smarting from the cruel blow, and stepped into a waiting cab and was driven at a rapid pace away from the painful scene."

"That'll just give you an idea of the style of the book, Estelle, but I don't want you to repeat it to any of the girls. Well, Lord Montmorency, seein' he can't catch Gwendolyn, havin' no cab handy, her havin' took the only one there was, turns and runs after the lady that struck her and when he overtakes her he's horrified. Who do you suppose it was? No, it wasn't Mrs. Daingerfield, either. It was his sister, the Lady Alice! A hit? Yes, I think it will be, Estelle; it comes so unexpected, you know. After that he can't find Gwendolyn for months, although he hunts all over London for her, because she gives up her job at the store and changes

her room. That's in the seventh chapter, and she's takin' sewin' for a livin' and almost starvin'. I know it's hard, but that's the way it is in novels."

"Then when do they meet again?" asked Estelle, breathlessly.

"That's as far as I've got," said May, "but I think it'll be on a yacht in the Mediterranean. I'm goin' to make her save his life."

"Gee! I bet that'll be elegant," murmured Estelle. "What are you goin' to call it?"

"I don't know yet," said May. "I was thinkin' of callin' it 'Lord Montmorency's Bride,' only that'd be a give-away on the finish, and maybe she'll die."

"Ah, now, May," pleaded Estelle, "if you make her die I'll never speak to you again. She'd oughter marry him, after all that's happened."

"Well, I'll see," said May, reflectively. "Maybe I'll call it 'Gwendolyn De Carteret's Secret,' but I don't know. Most novelists don't name their books right off. Did you read 'The Answer of the Princess'? Well, the name of that wasn't thought of until the whole book was actually *wrote*. What do you think of that? I had it straight from the man that sold it to me in the store."

"May," said Estelle, hesitatingly, "if I think up a good one will you name it that?"

"Perhaps, dear," said May. "Although, of course, you can't understand the inmost secrets of this thing the way I can. Still, I don't mind your suggestin' names, if you like."

Estelle, however, hadn't been able to think of a good name by the next morning, and meantime Lord Montmorency had been having a terrible time, hunting through London with a detective for the lost heroine and meeting no success at all, for two full chapters.

"You see, Estelle," said May, "if I let 'em meet too quick it wouldn't be art. He's just beginnin' to realize now how much he really loves her and in the chapter I finished last night he's wrote some verses about her. What are they?

Well, I haven't put 'em in yet—I just left the lines blank till I get more time. It takes more time to write poetry and make it rhyme good. Tonight I'm goin' to bring in Mrs. Daingerfield again, tryin' to kill Gwendolyn by runnin' over her with an automobile in Hyde Park."

"That oughter be swell," said Estelle. "Say, May, I told some of the girls last night. You don't mind, do you?"

"I'd rather you hadn't," said May, deprecatingly. "But now it's done I don't know's I care so much. What'd they say?"

"They're jealous," said Estelle.

"H'm. I s'pose so," said May, patting her side combs. "Isn't it strange, Estelle, dear, the dispositions some persons has? You didn't tell 'em the plot, did you?"

"No," said Estelle, guiltily. "I couldn't remember it all, anyhow. I just give 'em a general idea of the characters and the scenes."

"Well, I knew it would have to come out some time, anyhow," said May, resigned.

Estelle was strangely excited all the next forenoon, but it was bargain day at the notion counter, and she got no chance to talk to May until lunch hour arrived. Then she burst out, without stopping to inquire after Lord Montmorency.

"Oh, May! Three of the girls upstairs and one in the basement has started in."

"Started what?" said May.

"Novels!"

"Well, of *all* the impudence," said May.

"That's what I think, too," said Estelle, sympathizingly. "But don't you care, May. I don't think they'll be able to ketch up with yours, havin' started so much behind. Anyway, I don't like theirs as well."

"What are they about?" asked May, recovering her poise.

"Well, Nellie Green, in the tapestry department, has got hers named. It's called 'Lady Minerva's False Step.' She's got her first four chapters wrote—

she done that in one night, which is pretty good for her, I think. It's a society novel, she says."

"I can guess that," said May. "Why, that girl copied a waist I had, even to the buttons."

"And Claire McAvoy—she's in the same department," pursued Estelle, enthusiastically. "Hers is about France in the middle ages, with royalty in it. She seen a play about that last week—that afternoon she sent word she was sick."

"French royalty, hey?" sniffed May. "Claire never had good judgment about anything. You know as well as I do, Estelle, there ain't no call for French novels nowadays."

"Sure there ain't," said Estelle. "I guess I know that. But I didn't let on to her. I didn't think it'd be friendly to you to give her any tips. And there's that Kelly girl, in the book department."

"What's she doin'?" asked May quickly.

"Hers is a—what do you call it? A problem novel, I think she said it was. I guess it's one of them divorce books; she has such a chance to read them things, you know. I don't think it's quite fair, do you—her in the book department. She's wrote six chapters and I bet she copied some of it."

"Did you say there was one in the basement?" asked May, with an effort to be calm, and disdaining comment upon the doings of the Kelly girl.

"Yep; little Kitty Pidgeon. She's havin' a terrible time, though, and I kinder feel sorry for her. Y'see, she's writin' one about Mexico, and she ain't never been there, of course, and she finds it awful hard to get the dialect. She's only got two chapters done."

"Serves her right," said May. "The snip."

"You don't blame me, do you May?" asked Estelle, gently.

"No-o-o, I can't say as I do," said May, slowly. "'Twas all my fault, sayin' anything about it. But I guess none o' that bunch'll make much of a splash at it. Claire McAvoy on French society! Huh! If Jimmy Hannigan

gets wise to that it'll be nix her for Sulzer's ball. As for Nellie Green, let me give you a tip, Estelle. If you ever get anything new, don't talk about it until it's finished. She'd copy it, down to the stitches."

All of which Estelle reported faithfully to the three authors upstairs and the one in the basement. Nellie Green was so disturbed over it that she recited in detail the adventures of Hugo de Belleville, Marquis of Paris, to show that he was in no wise an imitation of Lord Reginald Montmorency, but was, on the contrary, an entirely different and infinitely superior personage, to say nothing of his surpassing wealth and kingly blood.

Estelle was primed to report back to May next morning, but it was May who got in the first word.

"You can tell them impersonators for me," said May, "that the whole novel-writin' field is clear, so far's I'm concerned."

"May!" cried Estelle, in dismay. "You ain't tore it up?"

"Nope, I didn't do that," said May. "I've changed it into a play."

"May! You darling!" Estelle could say no more.

"Yep, I changed it last night," said May. "Not because there was imitations. I wouldn't give 'em that satisfaction. But a play's easier. I been thinkin' for several days mine really ought to have been a play, and last night, when I got to the part where Gwendolyn De Carteret saves Lord Montmorency, who's fell off the yacht in the middle of a storm, I knew the minute I wrote it down it ought to be on a stage and not in a novel. So I started right in at the beginning and changed it."

"May, I think you're the grandest ever," said Estelle. "It'll make a lovely play, I just know it. Do you have to write it all over?"

"Not all of it," said May. "You see, I saved all the conversations—those are easy to write, anyhow—and took out all the descriptions. In a play you don't write descriptions; people just see 'em, you know. I'll go along a lot faster now."

"How many acts?"

"I had enough written for three acts," said May, "and there's two scenes in each one of those—maybe I'll put three scenes in the second one. I don't know yet; it depends on whether I decide to use the scene where Mrs. Daingerfield tries to kill Gwendolyn with an automobile."

"You mustn't leave that out, May," pleaded Estelle. "You gotter give the gallery somethin'."

"This ain't no melodrama, Estelle Murphy," said May. "This is a society play. I'm workin' up that bettin'-ring scene fine. There'll be bookmakers and jockeys and millionaires and society women and royalty, and maybe I'll put in the king—I don't know yet, because I've got to look up and find out how a king talks. The only thing worries me is where they could put it on. You couldn't never get it onto the stage at the Grand and I'd kinder like that actor to play in it. If they can't, I'll have to give it to Frohman, I s'pose."

"Oo-o-oh!" said Estelle, for lack of words.

"It oughter be done by Saturday," added May. "Still, I can't tell. It ain't like makin' a dress, you know. You gotter be in the spirit when you're writin', Estelle."

"Of course," said Estelle, nodding her head. "I know how it is when I want to write a letter."

The news that Lord Montmorency and Gwendolyn De Carteret had gone on the stage caused a flutter upstairs and in the basement. The Kelly girl, who realized that her problem novel was not readily convertible, said it was spiteful.

"I thought she'd flag the novel business," said Claire McAvoy, significantly. "But it was nasty of her, just as them two Miller girls in the crockery department was startin' theirs. Almost a insult, I think."

Being repeated, this was music in the ears of the creator of Lord Montmorency and his beautiful saleslady, who were now leagued in the fourth act to save themselves from the wrath of Mrs. Daingerfield. In fact, May was far

into the fifth act, with the prospect of even a sixth, when Estelle again appeared as a bearer of news.

"Hurry it up all you can, May," she said one morning. "This is from a friend. Honest."

"Why?" said May.

"Minnie Grauschmidt's writin' a play," said Estelle, in a noisy whisper.

"Oh, Estelle, fan me," said May, putting her hand to her heart.

"Ain't she the copy-cat, though?" said Estelle, putting her arm around her friend tenderly. "Don't you care, May. It'll never be like yours. You see, them girls told her about how you changed your novel and that put it into her head. She's writin' a comic opera. She's got a pianner, you know, and she's composin' the music. At least, she says so. She says it'll be something like 'Florodora,' but you can't never rely on what some of them girls say. They're so deceitful."

But May did not care to be consoled.

"I guess I ain't no different from other people that's tried to do something for themselves," she said, moodily. "Soon's anybody gets an idea, all the Mr. Butt-ins come along and grab it off. Although I do have to laugh at her writin' an opera, and not able to play ragtime that'd pass at a chowder."

The despondency of Miss McChesney continued all the following day and then it cleared away. Estelle noticed the change the first thing in the morning.

"Got it finished, May?" she said, hopefully. "'Cause Min's got stuck on a love song in the second act and it don't look like she'd ever get it right."

"Yep, it's finished," said May, cheerily.

"Oh, grand!" exclaimed Estelle. "When do I see it?"

"Never," said May. "It's burnt up."

"Oh, how could you?" Estelle showed signs of becoming tearful. "And you was goin' to let me be the first one to read it."

"Well, you see, Estelle," said May, "I didn't mean to be stingy with it, but

I couldn't help it, the way it come out. Y'know, yesterday I got another shock. Cash 409 came up to me and told me, confidential, that him and one of the elevator men was writin' a play together and had put Mr. Wishkins, the floor in this aisle, into it as the villain. It was a melodrama, with a hotel fire and a train robbery, and him and the elevator man was goin' to play the main parts in it themselves. Well, I wasn't goin' to demean myself in front of a cash-boy, but I said to myself, after he'd went off, 'May McChesney, here's the limit. If you don't get that play of yours wrote and finished this very night, next thing you know the scrub women'll be doin' grand operas.' So when I got home last night I sat right down after supper to finish up about Lord Montmorency and Gwendolyn. Well, right in the middle of it in comes Billy Jackson. I'd clean forgot it was Wednesday night."

"Oo-o-oh! And he seen it?" said Estelle.

"I didn't have time to put it away," said May. "He just picked it up and says: 'What's this?' 'Nothin' for you to see, Mr. Fresh,' says I. Well, of course, then he read it all through and I sat there, not knowin' what to say. When he got through he says: 'Who is this guy, Lord Montmorency? Where'd you get him?' 'I made him up,' says I. 'Is this what you was doin',' says he, 'when you turned me down on the ball and two theayter dates?' 'Yes,' says I. 'All right,' says he, 'now I'm on. If this was some real guy it'd be up to me. But as you say it's some imagination feller, it's up to you. Now, May McChesney, it's me or Lord Montmorency. If it's me, Lord Montmorency goes into the fire for his. If it's him, me for the door. Which is it?' And he goes over to the stove and opens the door and stands there, with Lord Montmorency in his hand. Well, I know Billy Jackson pretty well, Estelle, and he's terrible obstinate. So I says: 'Well, if *that's* the way you're goin' to take it, I guess it's you.' Then Lord Montmorency and Gwendolyn De Carteret went into

the stove together. And then Billy give me this."

"This" was a ring, with something in it that sparkled.

"For the land's sake, May!" shrieked Estelle. "And on your engagement finger!"

"Uh, huh," said May, breathing

gently on the little stone that sparkled, and rubbing it with her handkerchief for the fifth time that morning. "Say, Estelle, just pipe some of them novelists and play-writers around here copy-in' this. Hey? I guess that'll keep 'em busy for a while. I'm leavin' next month, too."



BALLADE DES BÊTES NOIRES

By Edward W. Barnard

THE pair gowk who has nothing to say
Is a bore, but I do not complain
When he falls to my lot, for the bray
Of the garrulous man is no gain.
I can smile when a friend on the train
Descants on elusory cooks,
But I cannot conceal my disdain
For the chap who would borrow my books!

I can list to love patter all day
Nor once call the culprits insane.
Prideful papas may make me their prey,
Nor suspect I'm in exquisite pain.
I can bear with a man who is vain,
Though he's nothing to boast of but looks,
But I cannot conceal my disdain
For the chap who would borrow my books!

I can thole the daft golfer whose play
Is his single song's theme and refrain,
And converse in a rational way
With the man who has Bridge on the brain.
As to anglers—not one would I fain
Hang on inquisitorial hooks,
But I cannot conceal my disdain
For the chap who would borrow my books!

I can pardon a Raffles his stain,
Yes, and whitewash the blackest of crooks,
But I cannot conceal my disdain
For the chap who would borrow my books!

THREE WOMEN AND LOVE

By Arthur Stringer

THE PADDED LIFE

Said Life to Love: "Much have I suffered
through

Thy ways, and for thy madness learned
to mourn!"

Said Love: "The things I leave undone or do
Must count not, for of me all life is born!"

SOMETHING about the half-squalid grandeur of the hotel in which she found herself brought a revulsion of feeling over Cynthia Britton. She had been confronted by nothing base and revolting to the eye, but the contrast between the dingy crimson faces of that corridor filled with meaningless and the intimate, violet-scented, firelit room she had left caused the intruder to shrink down a little behind the barricade of her heavy sables. Her earlier flame of resolution seemed to have burned away into a dull and sullen protest against the fact that she was not to face something tangibly odious, something against which to direct and centralize her hatred.

As she stepped from the upholstered and mirror-lined elevator-cage, with its taint of over-strong perfume and cigar-smoke, she could no longer feel that life was crowding and narrowing itself up into one climacteric apex. She had hoped to walk about this dilemma, discreetly yet deliberately, as about some new and nervous brood-mare in her husband's stables. But already she was teased by a sense of intrusion. She was no longer sure of herself.

Yet as she tapped on the door which the uniformed bell-boy had pointed out to her, she made one last effort to school herself to perfect calmness. A second bell-boy, carrying a trayful of whisky glasses and a siphon

of seltzer, hurried past her. Even her dull glow of protest, by this time, had withered down into what seemed the ashes of a pale indifference.

"Come in!" cried a high soprano voice from within the room.

Cynthia Britton carried away with her no distinct memory of opening and closing the door. All that remained with her was the feeling that she would look best and be most at ease if she restored her hands to the hollow of her muff. Her attention, as she did this, was fixed on what stood before her—the large red-carpeted bedroom with the half-drawn blinds, the wide white bed with its tumbled coverings, the scattered newspapers, and the young woman in a dark crimson *peignoir*, propped up against a bank of pillows. In her hand she held the card that had just come up from the office. She looked from the card to her visitor, and then back at the card again.

"I never thought that—that *you'd* be coming here!" said the woman on the bed, at last. She gave utterance to a nervous and yet a careless little laugh. It was her only outward sign of concern, and it was as free of scorn as the ripple of running water.

The woman, whose sable boa was rising and falling so quickly, studied the figure on the bed with an intentness of vision that let no detail go unrecorded, as she found her lips saying aloud: "One often does things in which one takes little immediate pleasure!"

She spoke with a lowness of tone that seemed a rebuff to the lighter-timbred voice, yet she was wondering,

even as that evading note of dignity fell from her, what had sapped away her earlier grim resolution, what had become of her burning passion for some final word to the sordid chapter?

"Well, *I don't!*" The soprano voice spoke the three pregnant syllables with a quiet drawl. They fell more as the confession of a victor, than the challenge of an enemy. It was the woman's life, thought Cynthia Britton, as she continued to gaze at her—her rudimentary and unrelated and irresponsible life in three short words.

She noticed the hand that held the card, the short white fingers, the softly enough turned yet strangely muscular looking arm, the thick white hand itself, the massive rounded neck. Then she noticed the two heavy ropes of braided hair that hung down in front of either shoulder. It was brown and thick and heavy; she felt sure it was a little coarse. She noticed the woman's wide thick shoulders. Then her gaze was fastened on the face itself, where some vague sense of fragility seemed to contradict the strength of the body, on the meek hazel-brown eyes, set so wide apart under the low brow that at first they seemed almost ox-like in their impression of placidity, the short straight nose that was clean-chiseled, but too broad at the nostrils, perhaps, to be called beautiful, the soft pear-like chin, the heavy wilful mouth that seemed so unnaturally red. She noticed, too, the large white teeth, and the ridiculous dimple, high on one cheek, seeming to mock the worldly-wise shadows of the strangely autumnal and almost colorless face with a touch of baby-like guilelessness.

For the second time a dim sense of frustration flashed through Cynthia Britton. The very thought of finding nothing to oppose left her more embittered even while it left her more helpless. She had looked for something primordial and animal-like, against which to test the keen steel of her higher civilization, against which to fling her sublimating fury. She saw only a white-throated and mild-browed woman, gazing back at her with ingen-

uous and baby-like eyes in which there appeared neither hate nor resentment. She felt herself the victim of an imprisoning and devitalizing career, where dignity forever gnawed on the proffered bones of concession and compromise. She seemed engulfed and choked in an endless gray fog of *ennui*, shot through with apprehension. Her soft and idle days had weakened her claws of instinct; she felt that she could never revert to the pagan type and fight for her threatened hearth. She even began to wonder in what way she was going to meet and combat this woman who had come between her and her home.

"Won't you sit down?" the woman was saying, in her mild soprano.

She waved a languid hand toward an upholstered rocking-chair close by the window. It was soft and padded and sustaining; the married woman felt glad of its material support.

"I guess you'll think I'm awf'ly lazy! Here it's almost twelve and I've never touched my breakfast yet!"

She laughed a little, almost deprecatingly, and looked down at the food that stood at her bedside. The other woman followed the line of her gaze. On the napkin-covered metal tray stood a pewter coffee-pot, and close beside it a nickel cream-jug and sugar-bowl. Near these, again, stood a platter of chops and a plate of buttered toast, grown cold, and a dish of scrambled eggs garnished with a parsley-sprig.

"You don't mind if I eat, do you?" said the woman on the bed, with her baby-like impersonality of stare, as she lifted the tray over to her updrawn knees and flung back her two heavy ropes of dark hair.

Then she reached under her pillow for a little silver "vanity-glass," and after a close and thoughtful scrutiny of her face, made an impersonal dab or two at her nose with a powder-puff. As the woman in the rocker still remained silent, she picked up one of the cold chops and a slice of the toast, and fell to munching the bread and meat between her strong molars. The chop,

which was "frenched," she held by the bone. From time to time, as she ate her toast, she stopped to lick the butter from her finger-tips.

A dozen rushing thoughts crowded through Cynthia Britton's mind as she watched this few seconds of dumb show. Often, in vaguely anticipating this meeting which was now filling her with such tingling and concrete miseries, she had imagined herself as pleading with her enemy. She now felt the absurdity of that, just as she saw the futility of any open conflict of word or will. Her opponent was an anomaly, as primordial and instinctive as an animal. She herself was the daughter of a super-refined and super-feminine exclusiveness of existence that built golden walls between its offspring and all elemental life. She wondered if her world was not forgetting how to hate, as it had forgotten how to love. She knew she had the hatred of her class for a "scene"—she had surrendered so many hostages to material dignity—there were so many things to remember; there were the grim yet insidious exactions of name and position, the secret yet continuous compromises to outward respectability. Life, as she had lived it, with all its involutions, had grown tame and old and discreet. Yet she could not face it without its upholstery; she could not imagine it without its wide-chaired boudoir and its waiting brougham. These things made keener and more continual demand than any barbaric play and abandon of passion.

The married woman stared in wonder at the crimson-clad figure eating the cold chop with its almost canine simplicity of appetite. The poor thing was hardly a woman! She was something to be pitied. Yet she hated herself for that incongruous emotionalism, as she felt the relaxing wave sweep through her, and make her path more complex than ever before.

"Why did you come up here to see me?" suddenly demanded the woman on the bed. The interrogation whipped out like a pistol-shot. It was the simplicity of the primordial once more.

She put down the chop-bone and licked her white, short fingers.

"Can't you imagine why I came?" asked the woman in the sables.

The other woman surveyed the tray at her side.

"It's something about Charlie?"

She held the plate of eggs poised before her, looking up with her exasperatingly mild and impersonal stare. If she saw the tight-lipped wife's wince of spirit she gave no sign of comprehending it.

The side light from the window threw into strong relief the face of the woman on the bed. If she had anything under the husk, if she only had brains, the other woman bitterly acknowledged to herself, with a sudden pang of acutest misery, she could see how a man might come to think of her as good-looking.

"Yes, it is something to do with my husband!" she answered, dimly held down by the other's devastating directness of approach.

"You want him back?"

There were three seconds of unbroken silence.

"I want him back," answered the wife.

The woman on the bed was moving her head up and down, slowly.

"I think he ought to go back," she said, in her drawling soprano.

An inarticulate gasp fell from the wife's lips. She closed her eyes, fighting for strength to speak, to say only the right thing, that her way might be left open and sane. She felt that she was bargaining for nothing more than the empty shell of a man—but all her life had been made up of the empty shells of things.

The woman on the bed turned and studied her visitor. The meek and wide-set eyes were penetrating in their sudden intentness of scrutiny. Yet their owner made no effort to conceal the admiration in her gaze, as she made note of the refined face with its sense of cool and quiet, of the small head so well poised above the narrow sloping shoulders, of the tall and well-gowned figure with its somber scrupulosity of

line. Then she sank back on her bank of pillows with a little sigh.

"Do you like Charlie?"

The tortured wife had told herself that she could be no longer affronted, happen what might. But she drew herself up, intuitively, combatively. Then an icy calm crept over her.

"I love my husband," was her answer, in the low tones that were a rebuff to the other's betraying highness of note.

The woman on the bed shook her head.

"No, you don't," she explained. "You *like* him!"

"And why, pray, this gratuitous qualification?"

"Because—well, just because if you *did* love him, the way I mean, you wouldn't be sitting there talking to me like you're doing! I can see how you'd *like* him. He can give you dresses and things, and horses and houses and all that kind of stuff you've got to have."

"How dare you!" gasped the married woman.

"But I guess that's not the kind of love a man like Charlie Britton'd want to be paid back in!" went on the other woman, unperturbed. "No, that's not the best kind of love for Charlie!"

"The best kind of love!" mocked the woman in sables.

Her enemy drew up her knees, and hugged them with her thick white arms.

"I don't think you understand Charlie," she began, conciliatingly.

"You don't think so?" scoffed the wife, trembling in spite of herself.

"If you *did* you'd be able to hold him, I guess! Charlie's always been so big and rough, he can't be satisfied with *acting*. I mean he's so crazy-headed and wild an animal—and I suppose that's why he never got what he was after out of all this quiet city life here. You women are all too cold and shut in for him—he always seemed to like things big and rough. I guess that's why he gets so much fun poking round those Big Eagle Mines. He can get away from high collars and company manners out there, and kind of break loose again. He's *got* to!"

The woman turned round with her childlike, impersonal smile.

"Oh, Charlie and me 've talked things over, many a time!"

"And did he tell—tell you all this?" broke, in a low and colorless voice, from the woman in the chair.

The eyes of the two women met.

"Why, doesn't he talk things over with *you*?"

The wife rose to her feet, unsteadily. After all, she could endure it no longer.

The woman on the bed held her with a sudden question.

"Have you got any children?"

Again there were several seconds of unbroken silence.

"I have no children," she answered, where she stood.

"Why?"

The standing woman put her hand on the padded back of the rocking-chair. She looked at the room, at the bed, at the crimson-clad figure, as though she had seen them all for the first time.

"Why should I talk such things over with you?" she cried out, in her pitiful and impotent hauteur.

"Charlie does," said the other, simply, as she brushed a crumb from her fingers.

"A woman like you ought to have children," she drawled on, relentlessly. "I guess every man's wife ought to have children, if she can. They keep her feelings from going to seed. They keep her from getting mean and morbid, too. But, what's more, things like that've got a way of keeping her humble—I mean they bring it home to her that after all she's an animal herself. And that's what holds a man, more often than not!"

The listening woman took three steps forward.

"Do you love my husband?" she demanded.

The other looked up, but still languidly, at the sudden passion in the wife's cry.

"I *like* him," she answered.

"Do you *love* him?"

The woman on the bed fingered the

coverlet, and shook her head from side to side, slowly.

"I guess it's not *him* I like. It's more just the *liking itself*, I suppose. I mean I've *got* to like somebody, or have somebody like *me*! I can't get along without love!"

"You!" cried the wife, in startled scorn. "You—love!"

"Yes, me!" answered the other placidly. "You'll never understand it, for you don't care about him yourself. If you did you'd be killing me, now, right here!"

"Killing you?"

"Yes, killing me—without caring much what it meant, either!"

"That's absurd. I'm—I'm not a mad thing of the streets! I'm not a cave-woman, a she-pagan, who has to snarl and fight and scratch for its mate!"

"No, *that's it!* Of course, you're not a fool! That's just the trouble! You've never been fool enough to forget that your hair's just Marcelled, or what folks are going to say about you when everything's over!" She turned suddenly on one hip to give emphasis to what she was about to say. "And that's why a great big rough-house fellow like Charlie Britton lives such an awfully mean and lonely life! You couldn't go and fall in love, like a fool, and you couldn't turn round and fight, like a fool!"

The woman pushed up her loose sleeves and looked at her short white hands, almost ruminantly.

"*I could!*" she ended, with her childlike directness. And the staring wife was startled to see that the other woman's eyes were flaming with some slow and mounting fire, for all her outward calmness of movement.

She waved her visitor toward the chair once more, almost imperiously.

"You may as well sit down—I want to tell you something. I've *got* to tell you, now, so you'll understand. I want a man to make a fool of himself over me. I guess that's the only proof I can ever get. Charlie Britton never would. And he never will. The last time he was going out to the Mines I

wanted him to take me out to the Big Eagle, for good. I like it out there. I don't know why, but I suppose it's because it's so big and raw and easy-going!"

She closed her eyes reminiscently. "D' you want me to go on?" she asked, with a sudden inapposite timidity.

"Yes, go on!"

"But it always seemed to me that it's—it's awfully fierce, out there. Charlie says it's only the altitude. But it grips you. You have to live hard, and drink hard, and die hard, too! But Charlie'd never stand for all that. He's had eleven years of—of bleaching out. He belongs to your set, now. He's a good deal like the rest of you—if you only knew just how to keep his hobble on! He's too—oh, too civilized for me. I *thought* that would make you feel better! But I've never cared enough to fight it out with him. Then I told him I was going out there by myself. He tore things up and said he'd rather see me dead, and that it would be a dog's life out there, in a Rocky Mountain mining-town."

"And you are going?" demanded Cynthia Britton.

"Maybe," said the other, with her enigmatic slow smile. "But here's what I want you to understand. If I'd cared for your husband, do you suppose I'd have thought of going? Not if I cared! I knew that, as soon as I was able to sit back and see him feeling so bad. If I'd *loved* him I'd have had to crawl after him, no matter where he went, or what he did. I suppose out there there *will* be somebody who'll be able to make another fool of me. But Charlie Britton never could!"

The married woman drew in a quavering breath, audible across the quiet room. The universe, to which she had always imputed some deep yet inscrutable order, seemed without justice, without pity. She had been made to suffer, beyond her due, for transgressions that were small and trivial. And this, this soft and pliant plaything of passions that flowed and raced about

her, doing nothing more than discolor the currents into which she had been flung, yielding and suffering nothing more than would a mass of clay in the bed of its river, this brought down no stroke of supreme reproof, this evoked no hour of retributive anguish!

She clasped the arms of her chair and gazed at the other woman, not so much with horror, now, as with wonder. It seemed maddeningly beyond her to comprehend the springs of action in this creature, who made emotion the ultimate and only arbiter of life and fate. She forgot her temporary sense of release, her momentary personal triumph, in the keener mental curiosity to fathom what she felt must be something antipodean. She watched her, with a sudden detachment, as she wiped her red mouth with the table napkin, flung aside her heavy braids of hair, and then leaned back on her bank of pillows.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" the woman on the bed asked.

Cynthia Britton moved her head, absently.

"I always do, after breakfast." And again she drew up her knees, under the tumbled coverings.

A moment or two later the heavy aroma of the Egyptian cigarette filled the room. The blue smoke curled ceilingward. Cynthia Britton looked at her companion, and wondered if she herself, with a cigarette between her fingers after bridge-whist, looked the same to her friends.

"You smoke yourself?" said the other, with her feminine intuitive alertness. She reached over for the gaudily lithographed box with a malicious little laugh.

The woman in the sables knew a denial was useless, for already she could feel the telltale flush creeping up to her very eyebrows.

The gaily-colored little box was handed to her, without a word. Her first impulse was to refuse. But that same impersonal intellectual curiosity which had already held her a studious observer of an unlovely scene, wherein

she had beheld swamp and founder her own sense of shame, still called to her for more light. She found herself possessed of a hunger to get in touch with the mystery of the woman, to uncover and know, once for all, the source of her enigmatic power.

She lighted the cigarette, hardly conscious of the act. It was not until she had done so that it struck her as a concession, as a ritual of compromise, of some nameless capitulation. She would have flung the perfumed horror from her, only she was startled by a sudden and peremptory knock on the door.

She looked up, and saw her husband standing on the threshold, saw him take half-a-dozen groping steps forward, and then come to a stop.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. The interrogation, she felt, was almost automatic. Again he moved forward, his eyes, by this time, wide with fear and wonder. Then still again he came to a stop, gazing at the two women, at the drifting arch of blue smoke that seemed to bridge and unite the two strangely diverse beings before him.

"What are you doing here?" he gasped, coming to his senses.

Cynthia Britton looked down at the gold-tipped cigarette, which she had crushed, unconsciously, between her shaking fingers. Then sudden laughter, mirthless, abandoned, cruel, shook the huge frame of her husband, at the eviscerating irony of it all.

She heard it, and did not move. She waited, wondering if one of the others would speak.

It was not tragic, nor was it comedy. It was only life as it had always been to her, a thing of tangled complexities, of subversive side-issues, of hampering neutralities of emotion, but always without one engulfing and implacable passion.

"Take her home, you fool!" commanded the woman on the bed, in her strident soprano. "Can't you see that she wants you to take her home?"

II

THE BONES OF LIFE

If all the tears by men and women wept
 Because of love, in one vast ocean lay,
 Life still would cry, as to that deep it crept:
 "A little love—then gladly I shall pay!"

"LORDLY AMES," the giant foreman of Number Three, clutched at the edge of an ore-car and watched for the express to go east. He could see it at last, through smoke-plumed chimneys and dust-stained ore-chutes, twining and crawling along the valley bottom, two miles below. That train was taking "The Boss" once more to the East; Lordly Ames wished to heaven that it wasn't taking him alone. But there was no getting out of things as easy as that. And Lordly Ames wiped his great forehead with the back of his hand.

It was his first day back at the Big Eagle Smeltery. He was still weak and sick, and the keen mountain air cut him like a knife-blade. But he was going to sweat it out, as he had done before. He was in luck to be back at his work. If the Boss hadn't appeared in the nick of time, and made it easy for him, about getting back, he wondered where he would have been—after those red and lurid weeks of things that now seemed like a nightmare, and those five long weeks in the Mounted Police Hospital, and those three limp and tottering days hugging the box-stove in Sunset Stevens' saloon! Then he cursed himself and his luck, and crawled back to his old solace, work.

But Lordly Ames, "the driver av men and the divil wid wimmen," as he was known to that uncouth colony of "Black Irish" that fringed the upper levels of the Big Eagle, was not what he had been. The broad, dare-devil face had weakened; the bull neck had fallen away. In the glare of the smelter fires he turned dizzy and sick. His throat seemed burning for a few drops of the old anodyne, as far away as Sunset Stevens'. His arm was flaccid. And work was going hard with him. He wished he were home.

Already his clothes were moist and soggy with sweat, and he hadn't so much as lifted a hand. He was still troubled with what he called that "bit av lung trouble." The young police surgeon in the little clapboarded hospital had called it double pneumonia. Whatever it was, Lordly Ames knew that it had hit him hard. He wished he were home.

But that came too late. "Tell me you'll never go back to her!" the other woman had cried, clinging to him with her soft hands. He remembered it, sinkingly, as he mopped the wet from his face.

Toward noon a sudden chill came over him. It bewildered and terrified the man of strength in his first sickness. A sharp knife-blade of pain pushed through his left breast. He crouched down on an ore-car, shivering and cowed.

Two of the hands from the "Vibratory" found him there, and helped him back to the heat. There he lay, holding his jaws together, in the full blaze of the open furnace doors. But still he shivered. Oily beads of sweat glistened through the smoke and dust on his blanched face. He wished he were home.

The heat from the fiery red cavern scorched his great boots till the smell of burning leather filled the air. But still he shook with his chill. They came and lifted his feet away from the fire, whereat he whined that he was cold. "Only promise me that you'll never go back to her!" the other woman had pleaded and begged, following him to the door. And as he lay there he cursed her, gently, for saying it.

In time Lordly Ames' chill wore itself away, but it left him dazed and weak, with sudden spasms twisting and bending his great body. Kootenay MacIntyre, the foreman of Number Two, came and looked down at him and said he ought to get back home to bed.

He got to his feet, and fought his way into his coat, and crawled out into the open air. He felt, though, that he could never go home. But now the thought of the other woman sickened him. He hated her eternal white hands

and her way of hounding him. He wanted a long rest

Just under the Covert Flume, beyond the Mary Stewart shaft, he was taken with a sudden dart of pain once more, and, as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he saw that it was red with blood. Slowly he began to understand what it meant. He looked about him, terrified.

Now he *had* to go home; there was no way out of it. Somewhere he had heard that it was good to eat ice, in case of a hemorrhage. He clutched, with shaking fingers, at the unclean water frozen at the roadside, at the discolored icicles that hung from the sluice. But his stomach revolted at its filthiness, as it dissolved muddily on his tongue, and he spat it out.

That settled it; he would go home, and sleep. He would straighten it all out with Nora, some way or other. But he had heard that men taken that way often lived for months, in that mountain air, dying a little every day. He put his hand to his hip. Then he remembered his gun had gone over the bar, for a last round of drinks, weeks before. If it turned out that way, he would settle it quick and short, with his boots on.

He came to a stop in front of the Big Eagle Supply House. Then he crawled inside and asked for a cheap revolver. He was shown a futile little toy with a white bone handle, for a dollar and a half. He flung it down and asked what the devil good a thing like that was—he wanted something that was big enough to kill a dog, he declared, wiping his mouth with his sleeve.

"What size dog, colonel?" asked the man in the blue-flannel shirt, behind the rough counter, eying him meaninglessly. Life, in those rough hills walked bare to the buff.

"A dog about me own size!" was his answer.

"Then maybe *he'll* do!" said the other, caressing a heavy, ugly, thirty-eight calibre six-shooter.

Lordly Ames groped his way out. But still he wanted to go home. He felt that he could make it up, some

way, with Nora. Foot by foot, leaning on rocks and stumps, he wore his way along, staggering from shack to shack, leaning on whatever chanced in his way. He tottered to that one particular outskirt shack, so like the others, yet so different. Foot by foot he crept back to his home, as dying men have done before.

A woman with red arms, bending over a pine washtub, looked up at him through clouds of steam.

"I've come back!" he said, with his hand on his chest.

"Ye've come back?" she repeated, unfeelingly.

He staggered in through the low door. She gazed at him with withering scorn.

"What's that blood from?" she cried suddenly. He leaned against the rough wall, and wiped his mouth, weakly.

"I'm sick, Nora," he whined, like a child. "I'm sick; and I've come back to you!"

"Where's *she*?"

"Ye're me wife, Nora!" He shivered forlornly. The woman made a step toward him; then stopped.

"If ye're sick, go back to her who's been takin' care av you this last two months!" she flung out at him bitterly. Something in his face alarmed her. But she had never gone a step to bring him back! She had spoken no word! And she bent over her tub once more.

Lordly Ames unlaced his scorched boots with shaking fingers. Then he crawled into bed, with his damp clothes still on. He felt another chill coming. But still the woman held back.

"Some whisky, Nora; for the love av God, some whisky!" he cried out, with his blind fear of the blackness about him. She came and stood over him, arms akimbo. He was shaking the little wooden bed until it rattled on its four posts. She looked down at him with calm and studious eyes. Again he begged for a drop of whisky.

"Why don't ye call to *her* for your whisky?" she suddenly cried out, in what was almost a scream. "Her, wid her laughin' and finery! *Oh!*"

She glared at the dare-devil face so drawn and blanched, at the bull neck so fallen away. He frightened her.

"Ye've been rotten to me!" she said slowly. Then she caught at him, as though to strangle him. "Ye've spoilt me life!" she went on, gathering fire and rapidity as she spoke. "Ye've made me the laughin' stock av the town! Ye've left me alone widout help and money! Ye've broken me heart and laughed over it—wid her! Oh, ye've not been kind to me! Ye've treated me like a dog, Mickie; ye've treated me like a dog!"

It ended in a high wail, as a sudden passion of tears rained from her eyes.

Then she caught at the shivering hulk of his body, hungrily, and tried to warm it with the weight of her own. But this was only for a moment. She came to her senses, and with a quick thumb and forefinger scooped the suds from her strong red arms. She could hear the shaking of the wooden bed as she hurried out through the door with a shawl thrown over her shoulders. He was sick, sure enough; but when was the time, she demanded, when her big strong Mickie couldn't throw a thing off, with the help of a drop of whisky!

As she came scuttling back from Sunset Stevens', with her heart in her mouth, Tim Murchison met her outside the shack door.

"Then it wasn't you?" he said.

She brushed past him. "What wasn't me?" she demanded, with her hand on the latch. The waiting man noticed the movement of reproof.

"Oh, nothin!" he answered, with a meaning look. "I was just comin' in."

"Ye can't, Tim—Mickie's home!" she cried, looking about in alarm.

"Mickie home! What's that to you and me?"

"He'll murther you, Timothy Murchison!"

"And haven't ye told him ye were comin'—comin' wid me?"

"'Twas all me philanderin', Tim!" she cried in sudden terror.

"But ye meant it?"

"Tim, ye're a fool!"

"But I've your promise! Ye swore

June, 1906—9

ye'd shame him, to the whole av Big Eagle, when he came back, tired av—av the other wan!"

"I was mad wid rage—jealous rage!"

"But I've a feelin' ye'll keep to it!"

"Ye're stoppin' me way—and me Mickie is sick!"

"I'll not have ye put me off, like an ould coat."

"Ye bla'guard! I'm a wife, and a good woman!"

The man stood back, laughing wickedly.

"He's come back to me, I tell ye!" she cried proudly, in answer to his jeer.

"Come back to ye, has he!" scoffed the other. "And wid *her* for comp'ny!"

"Wid her? What d'ye mean by that?"

"I mean, my dear, that's she's wid him now!"

"Ye lie!" she flamed back at him.

"Look inside, me darlin'!"

"Ye lie!" she cried again, but with a whiter face.

"She said she'd be keepin' him to the end! She said she'd hold him, do what ye could!" he mocked.

The woman with the white face crept through her door, and peered in.

Through the gloom she saw her, the other woman, bending over the squalid little bed. And on that bed lay her husband.

"Your hands off that man!" she screamed, baring her arms.

"Be still!" said the woman quietly, in her plaintive soprano.

"Still! And why should I be still!" cried the wife, advancing.

"Be still—he's dead!"

"And what's that to *you*?" cried the dead man's mate, flinging off her shawl.

"It's this, you fool!" said the other woman suddenly, with Lordly Ames' pistol at her own painted mouth.

The short, white finger pulled the trigger, and the sudden report shook the dust and clay from the log-chinks. The wife watched the thin cloud of smoke that drifted out through the open door. Then she saw the other

woman, where she had fallen forward on her face across the bed. flung it horridly out on the bare floor.

"Tim!" called the ashen-faced wife, "Tim!" she called again, as she looked at the skirted and perfumed thing.

She seized the still warm body that lay so jealously over the cold one, and *"Tim, me darlin', I'm waitin' to go wid ye, now!"*



VISION DE PRINTEMPS

Par Victor Margueritte

LES ruines au loin profilent, sous l'azur,
 Leur masse claire que le soleil frappe et dore;
 Avril, de toute part, pousse sa brusque flore,
 Une herbe folle tremble à chaque pan de mur.

Mais l'asphodèle a beau jaillir du marbre dur,
 L'anémone pourprer la gorge ronde encore
 Et le lierre, autour des débris de l'amphore,
 Tordre le deuil vivant de son feuillage obscur!

Les Victoires ont clos leurs ailes immobiles.
 Il manque la moitié du masque indélébile;
 La terre, lentement, regagne du terrain.

Rien de changé, sinon la fuyante surface;
 Toujours, au fond du ciel, marche le temps serein,
 Dont le pas dans la neige ou dans l'herbe s'efface.



THE LATEST

MIGHTY drops of water,
 Little drops of milk,
 Make the milkman's daughter
 Dress in finest silk.



BOB—Don't you think love is a species of insanity?
ETHEL—Sometimes. Who has been falling in love with you?

SPRING TIDES

By Cecil Carlisle Pangman

YOUNG WARRENDER sat in his window and looked out upon the late afternoon. The sun was dropping behind the roof of his apartment-house and the street below was filled with shadows, but the long golden rays still lingered among the tree-tops of the park across the way, which bowed and swayed under the warm breeze in waves of wondrous, delicate, shimmering green, and the music of their waving floated over to him and set his blood stirring. The measured clatter of the horses' feet smote up from the asphalt pavement below; in the surrounding quiet he could hear the regular clip-clop of their hoof-beats begin several blocks above him, and follow the sound far away into dim remoteness as they passed the length of the street and were swallowed up in the faint roar of the Avenue. At times came the hurried throbbing of an automobile, with its harsh, staccato note of warning, as it neared the corner below, but young Warrender had neither eyes nor ears for the tides of the city's traffic eddying through the back-water of his quiet neighborhood, and sat nursing his heart into rebellion. Wandering, idle puffs of wind swayed the white curtains of the window above his head into the room and then carried them floating out again over the street, and the moving air was as the tug of Spring at his heart, as it waved the curtains wide. He smelt the fresh fragrance of the gay parterres of flowers newly set out and staring the dusky green of the lawns under the shadows of the chestnuts and maples, and listened to the winds in the tree-tops calling and calling, for

Spring was in the air, and his blood, insurgent, leaped to the call obediently.

"I've got to get out of this," said young Warrender. "It's no use pretending I can settle down here again. I've tried it for months and it's quite hopeless." He yawned and stretched himself wearily. "I'll be driven to a furious career of dissipation or rebound to the farthest extreme of piety, neither of which things would become me."

And why ever, he reasoned with himself, should he try to close his ears to the urgent call of the Springtime, and repeat the outworn sophistries of his generation to his soul, when the most serious and compelling matter, beyond all dispute or argument, was to pack and trek with his back upon the city, "to meet his mate, the wind that tramps the world"? Spring comes but once in all a twelvemonth, and the Spring winds were calling.

Into the quiet dusk of the room came noiselessly his friend Stanhope, and clapped him on the shoulder as he sat staring out over the park.

"Confound it—don't do that!" cried young Warrender sharply. Then, "Who in the deuce are you, anyway? Oh—hello, Stanhope."

"Sorry, old man," said Stanhope. "I forgot about your ribs. Hope I didn't hurt. What are you sitting alone in the dark for?"

"It isn't dark—and if I am alone, it's better than your silly company," rejoined young Warrender, irritably. "Don't stay here and bother now. Get out."

"All right, angel. I'll go when I'm ready. Gad, you're in a lovely temper. That's for frowsting by yourself

all afternoon instead of running up and down the Avenue like a well-behaved young man making his bow to the world."

"Oh, blow the world, and all that therein is. 'Creeping things innumerable'—"

"Both small and great beasts.' Yes, I know. Well, certainly, blow 'em, by all means." Stanhope acquiesced cheerfully in the wholesale condemnation, pulling a deep chair to to the window in which he settled himself luxuriously and lit a cigarette. "By the way, though, that same world is asking about you and wondering in its spare moments when you are going to put in an appearance amid the giddy, gilded throng once more. A fellow doesn't need all this time to nurse a couple of sprained ribs, you know."

"It was three ribs stove and an arm and leg broken as well, and if you think that sort of thing's a bally picnic, just drop out of this window and get a taste of it for yourself. Then you'd be better able to criticize." Warrender leaned over to get a view of the pavement below. "It would just about do for you nicely, if you used good judgment, and I'd be rid of you at the same time. Hand me my pipe from the table there and then go home, Stanhope—please. Go and poison some one else's moral atmosphere with your idiotic company. What the deuce and all you want to come fussing round here for?"

"Now, don't talk to me like that," retorted Stanhope sweetly, tilting back in his chair and blowing a swift succession of rings towards the ceiling, "or I'll jolly well bang your silly head against the wall. Tell me what's up, old man. It isn't the arm or the ribs, for I know you are as fit as ever you were. Why, you're as young and as lusty as an eagle in spite of your accident. Now, tell me what you mean by sitting alone in the dark. It isn't pious, respectable or even decent. Come—fess up."

"Oh, you go to the dickens, Stanhope!"

"Say to the devil, if you wish to and it does you any good. I don't mind. But I'm not going—at least, not quite yet, although I'm firmly convinced he would prove infinitely better company than you are at this present moment. But I happen to be on a mission. I'm an apostle to the heathen—which is you. I'm delegated by a select, a very select, committee of your old friends in session on this afternoon—all ladies, of course—to find out what has become of you, and why, when and how. If you don't show up they'll be guessing and surmising all manner of curious things."

Young Warrender was engaged in picking the blossoms from the plants in his window-box and flicking them out into the street. He turned slowly round in his seat and set his feet down on the floor.

"Stanhope, I think I'll tell you the trouble," he began hesitatingly, after a long pause. "I didn't believe at one time I could ever talk about it to anyone, but I've been nursing it for several months, now, all to myself, and I've just got to. I would rather it was you than anyone else, in spite of your usual cheap and silly cynicism."

He struck a match and held it to his pipe. The fitful leaping of the little flame showed up the tense lines of his mouth, the unusual pallor of his face and the troubled eyes under the rumpled hair falling over his forehead. Then the light went out and he settled himself back into the window corner and smoked in silence for some time. Stanhope got out another cigarette and kept opening and snapping his case idly to rouse Warrender, but felt it unwise to urge his confidence by any speech. His friend's unusual reticence was warring with a strange impulse to unburden himself, and he watched the struggle curiously. In the darkness he could just distinguish the other's profile, black and salient, against the pale glare now stealing up from the street, where the electrics were suddenly lit. Then young Warrender's voice came very slowly from behind the curtain.

"It was at a little station between

here and Albany—perhaps it was on the other side of Albany; it doesn't matter. I've forgotten the name, too—but that doesn't matter, either. We had stopped to take on water for the engine or to change engines; I don't know which. It must have been after midnight quite a good bit. I hadn't been sleeping well—I never do in those beastly Pullmans—and I had run up the blind of my window a little and was watching the long line of switch-lights twinkle red and green along the tracks stretching away into the darkness. In the absolute stillness my ear caught the faint humming vibration in the air of a locomotive running at high speed, and I saw a dim star, low on the horizon, suddenly flash and burst into a headlight, rounding a curve in the yard, and shoot down on us. I watched it quite idly, never for a moment suspecting, of course, the awful fact that it was on the same track as my train. I wouldn't have taken it so quietly if I had, you may be sure. I rather wonder what my sensations would have been if I had known it and realized the impossibility of escape at the same time. It turned out afterwards to be an engine and a string of empties, with driver and fireman both asleep, after thirty-six hours or so at their posts, poor devils, and going by all signals full tilt, and—well, we happened to be in the way, that's all.

"As I watched I saw someone run along the station platform waving a lantern furiously and shouting madly. Then, without the slightest warning, there was a tremendous shock and crash on crash, and I was hurled against the end of my berth with a fearful thud. That was where the ribs went, I think. Then the bottom seemed altogether to drop out of things and the top to fall in, and I could hear, on the instant, the most awful shrieks and cries about me. I remember saying to myself, 'Somebody hurt,' in quite a detached manner, as you do when you hear a cry in a crowd at the next corner or watch a football scrimmage in a tangle. And over and above all rose the roar of escaping steam. That engine had

opened out the rear Pullman like a cigar-box and driven it in on my car ahead, and then came and sat down upon the whole thing generally, while the empty freight cars climbed and frolicked over all.

"I must have lost my senses almost immediately after the first crash. When I came to, I found myself lying flat on my back on a pile of wreckage, pinned down hand and foot, with all the weight of the universe on my body. Gad, we're only pipe-stems, after all, when it comes to strength, and it's a wonder we can stand what we do.

"The din and clamor were fearful, yet my head seemed wonderfully clear through it all. The whole wreck was full of prayers and cries and oaths. I don't know which one of the three I would have broken out into, only I didn't think of it, being too much interested to see what was going to happen next, or else I had either lost my voice or failed to hear it among the others, smothered in the roaring of the steam above me. I made the slightest, most cautious movement to try and discover how I was fastened down, and almost fainted with pain. There appeared to be a huge piece of metal or timber across my legs, and I didn't know whether I had any such appendages left to me at all; and across my breast and shoulder lay another weight that made every breath agony from the broken ribs that dug into my lungs. I'm trying to tell you just how things were, so you mustn't mind if the details appear a bit gruesome. I'm not embroidering the tale at all, either. It's only to help you realize a little of what deliverance would mean to me. Understand? I knew one of my arms had gone from the shoulder—gone clean, and I think I prayed then a moment for death to come quickly. It didn't seem humanly possible to bear such pain any longer.

"I was roused partially by hearing the shouts of the rescuers; the station gang had come on the jump and the volunteers from the village turned out, too. But I knew they wouldn't reach me in time. I could see the lights of

their lanterns bobbing and flickering past some openings in the wreckage piled above and around me, but I was deep down in the heart of it all, and I knew that the steam or the patent gas from the car reservoir would probably reach me first and put an end to things if, meanwhile, my wracked body didn't give up the ghost. The only horror withheld was that the wreckage didn't catch fire; why, I don't know. I found myself waiting for the blaze to break out and still more completely destroy any least possible chance of escape. Then——

Warrender shifted a little in his seat and knocked out the ashes from his pipe on the window ledge. Stanhope sat invisible and immovable in his chair, stirring never a muscle. The noises of the street and the steady drone of the distant avenue, beat into the darkness of the room and were swallowed up and lost in the silence.

"Then——" young Warrender commenced again. His voice dragged. "Then, lying there in the black, in all the unveiled horror of realization of my helpless, hopeless position, I felt a touch on my hand—the hand of the arm I had lost, you know. The weight, as I said, lay across my shoulder and breast, pinning me flat on my back, and my arm was stretched out beneath it. I felt someone's fingers slip over mine and slip away and then come back again. It seemed miles away and beyond all control—not my hand at all, you understand—and yet, when the impulse rose to clasp and retain those lingering fingers, I found to my amazement, my hand obeyed and I closed it upon the warm, living touch of flesh. And, on the instant, with that touch, I drew in faith and hope and courage. I knew then I would not die in that ghastly pile, and as the minutes dragged by, each one an hour long, I listened to the chopping and heaving of the rescue gangs, as they tore the wreckage apart, cheering hoarsely as each living person was exhumed. I want you to understand, Stanhope, the entire change that came over me at that moment of our meeting fingers

—the bound from despair to hope; the leap across the gulf from hideous dark to light; the resurrection to fresh, renewed life of fading, hopeless vitality. Through them I laid hold once more on strength and courage which had slipped beyond me for a while, and my blood went strong and thrilling through every vein from that swift touch.

"Yet, if I won out, it was to be a close race between the rescuers and the gas. I was still able to think quite clearly, and it seemed that the danger of the steam, death from inhaling or scalding, had passed. They took out two poor fellows, I was told long afterwards, living from the wreck; one of them walked away unassisted when released and in half an hour, from inhaling the steam, fell dead, without a mark on his body; the other went soon after.

"But I could smell the gas now settling down over me, wave on wave; the tank must have been close to me, and its poisonous breath was leaking fast. It had become a race, indeed. I felt my head swim and my brain sicken and clog; the margin of hope was narrowing cruelly down and I seemed buried beyond all discovery, but I clung to that mysterious hand as a falling man clutches and snatches at twigs and stones as he slides towards the precipice's brink. Then those fingers I was clasping relaxed and fell from mine, and I seemed at that moment to lose hold again on life and hope and courage during a hideous instant. I wanted to live and move about again, to be quick and breathing in the free sunlight and my fancy had vested my only chance in the hold I kept on that hand stretched out to me through the dark. The suspense and horror following on my sudden loss were awful. Then I felt the touch again, and for a second or two I was puzzled. Something softer, smoother lay against my hand; it felt as though lips and cheek were pressing into my palm and I could feel the warm breathing on my wrist. The gas thickened rapidly now, each breath I drew was heavier with poison, but I could not turn my head an inch for re-

lief. I appeared to be floating off into complete unconsciousness, losing all sense of pain, when the light of a lantern flashed suddenly into my face across the piled and twisted timbers, and the touch was gone. They were lifting my fellow-prisoner out. I heard a voice—a woman's voice, from a great distance, young and quite clear, 'Please oh, please! He's in behind there—quick! Don't mind me. Oh, quickly!' Someone took hold of the wreckage, and a hideous jar seemed to crush the little remaining life out of me, and all went black as death. I awoke in the hospital at Albany."

Stanhope leaned forward, searching for a match, and lit the cigarette which had gone out in his fingers.

"And—?" he queried, after a pause, watching the glowing spark.

"There is no 'and,'" replied young Warrender quietly.

A long silence settled on the room, broken only by the creak of Stanhope's chair as he rocked it back and forth on its rear legs.

"Don't do that," cried young Warrender sharply. His voice was almost a gasp. Stanhope let his chair down softly.

"I know I owe my life to her," young Warrender went on, speaking to himself. "She kept spirit and hope alive in me when I was willing to let both go, and gave me heart to fight, and if she hadn't called out to direct the men, they wouldn't have discovered me until too late. I know it. And she lay with her cheek on my hand. I could feel her breath across my wrist. I feel it yet, when I wake up suddenly in the night and find myself back in that ghastly wreck."

"So that's the trouble, is it?" Stanhope asked after another long pause.

"Yes—just that. I thought the telling might help somewhat, but it doesn't. I can't make it all seem real to you, as it is to me, and so you can't understand."

"Well, couldn't you find out who she was?"

"I didn't see a paper for two months

afterward, and by that time, all report and interest in the accident had long since died completely away. I was one of the last of the injured passengers to get about again. And, besides, she may have been fatally hurt and died. She may have died, Stanhope."

"Couldn't the railway people tell the names of their passengers in the Pullmans from their diagrams or whatever records they keep, on that night? Or the conductors of the cars would know something."

"There may have been a dozen women on board that night," replied young Warrender, hopelessly. "Besides, I couldn't find out that way. It wouldn't be fair—to her. You understand that, don't you? It wouldn't be fair. Yet, I must find her somehow, Stanhope—to thank her, if for nothing else. I want to know if she is alive and well, somewhere—that she isn't dead. This is no fancy or hallucination on my part. It's something I've got to do—something I've got to do."

"It's an impossible sequence of events, taken all round," stated Stanhope, slowly and judicially, from the depths of his chair. "The needle in the haystack would be a pyramid on a plain compared to it. So it's that which has driven you to shun the wholesome companionship of your kin and kind? Well, you had better go away fishing for a while, I think."

"There, I knew you would say just some such silly nonsense. You can't understand—or begin to understand what this thing is to me. You think I'm weak in the head, I suppose—that I don't see things squarely, as they are. It's you who are the idiot, Stanhope, and your gross matter-of-factness hasn't left you sense enough to admit there may be things it doesn't understand. What's the use of talking about change of air? I'm as well and strong as ever I was." Young Warrender stretched out his arm and caught up a chair from the floor. "There's nothing the matter with me, is there? Look!"

"No—not with your body. You're

the same ox as of old, Warry. But, I still say, go away and fish. You've been thinking over this thing far too much, and got the whole business out of focus. You may forget all about it—and so much the better. And then, of course, you may not. But, in any event, you'll have your mind occupied with other things and will be able to acquire a more intelligent perspective than brooding over it alone in the dark, here."

"It's no use you talking that way," interrupted young Warrender, impatiently. "I might have known you would take that absurd point of view, before I ever told you a word. I'm infernally sorry I said anything about it, now. Anyway, I'd made up my mind to get away for a while. I can't stand town any longer—it's no use. I'll get out into God's country, somewhere. Now, where, Stanhope, if you want to help me? Some new, untrodden paths; I'm sick to death of old ones."

"You'll go up to my club in Canada," said Stanhope, getting on his feet and pulling on his gloves. "You'll take the train in an hour or so and travel all night to Montreal. Then you'll take another train and go north straight into the mountains and the wilderness, to the length of the very last rail. Then you'll drive many miles more until you come to a new heaven and a new earth, and also, a lake which has more trout in it than water, and where the fish run so large that, when you pull the big fellows out, the water sinks away from the shore. Gird up your loins and take your staff in your hand—your rod, that is. Flee the devil, Warry, when he's got the deal and you know the cards are stacked. I'll wire tomorrow early for them to expect you, and I'll follow on up myself some day, to see how your cure is working out. Is it a go?"

"Yes, I suppose so," assented young Warrender, wearily. "I don't care where it is, so long as I get away."

II

NARCISSE SARAZIN, the guide, came around from the back of the club-

house where he had been busily cleaning the day's catch of fish, and found young Warrender smoking placidly on the veranda watching the sunset flare across the hills—a flaring, wide-winged sunset, amid the hush of infinite solitude.

"*M'sieu* will be pleased to hear," Narcisse began hesitatingly, "there will be more people tomorrow. Prosper bring the word over from the station."

Young Warrender shifted in his chair.

"I'm not pleased at all, Narcisse. Why can't they go somewhere else?"

"But, *m'sieu*, it is the judge from Washin'ton. He is the president of the club. He bring many people up with him, also, and times will be gay."

"I don't want them gay, Narcisse," replied the young man ungraciously. "I'd rather have times as they are. Can't you tell 'em the club-house is burned down and send 'em all back again? I'll burn it down tonight myself, if you like, and take to the woods with a tent."

"*Ciel, m'sieu*. That you cannot mean. You laugh, *vraiment*." The guide was seriously alarmed.

"All right, Narcisse; don't worry. But it's just my luck having a parcel of people turned loose on the country just when I'm beginning to enjoy things. They'll spoil everything."

Narcisse was frankly puzzled, and stood rubbing one moccasined foot over the other. He was also pained that the news he brought did not appear to enchant more the young gentleman, who had been all alone for two weeks and who spoke so little. He turned to go away dejectedly. Young Warrender called him back.

"Narcisse, I will go away myself, then, tomorrow—back to the great city. This country is too good to share with anyone. For I have work to do—much work, and I am playing truant like a boy. Back to the city tomorrow, Narcisse."

"*Oui, m'sieu*."

"See that my things are all put to-

gether tonight, and give orders to have me driven over to the station in the afternoon. I will go to the north inlet in the morning early. There is a trout there who has laughed at me all week—but I'll get him tomorrow. I will go early, Narcisse, by canoe, and you need not come to paddle."

"It shall be as *m'sieu* wishes." The guide removed himself noiselessly and left young Warrender staring out across the darkening waters before him, until his tired body rebelled and sent him wearily to bed.

It was beneath a sky all rose and amethyst, upon waters shot with pearl and opal light, that young Warrender, facing the dawn-wind, paddled swiftly across the lake and disappeared up the inlet; and the day had grown to late afternoon before he came wading down its golden shallows, casting over all the likely pools for rises. The light line swished back and forth, dropping as softly on the water as floating thistle-down, and the stillness was only broken by the purr of his reel as he added yard after yard to the length of his cast. The heavy creel slung across his shoulders told of a successful foray, and, prize of prizes, in it lay enthroned the king of all the inlet, who had defied capture the whole day among the shadows and pools of the head waters. The shrill whistle of his train had been tossed and echoed among the hills, carried afar and flung down to him in the wooded pass, with its sharp reminder of manifold duties set aside and obligations disregarded, but he had neither heard nor heeded. He was very wet and muddy and tired, but happier than he had been for many a long day. The peace of the hills had entered into his soul and his trouble seemed to stand off from him.

He found his canoe hidden among the rushes and swamp-grass and into it he unslung his creel, standing hip-high in the water to unjoint his rod and take off the casts. From an anchored log he climbed in and pushed out from the shadows into the blinding glory of the lake, now flashing golden in the slanting light of the sinking sun.

He shipped his paddle and settled himself luxuriously in the bottom of the canoe. He would prolong to the utmost limit possible the charm of peace of this God-given day. Memories would greet him on his return and harass his soul, duty scorned and derided would stand at his elbow and chasten his spirit, but this day, at least, was his. *Carpe diem!*

"Stanhope was right, after all, I suppose," he muttered at length, addressing the firmanent above him, for lack of any other listener. "I'm acquiring a saner outlook and the whole business does appear silly, and I've been foolish in letting it get such a grip on my imagination. It's three parts imagination, anyway, I suppose, to one of fact, and the reality had become so overlaid with the fanciful, I couldn't separate the two. That's the way it would appear to anyone else, hearing the story, and yet, no one who hadn't been through that awful night, as I was, can criticize fairly; it's outside the ordinary man's range of experience altogether, and not to be judged by his standards. Fanciful or not, life and death hung upon my touching that strange hand held out to me through the dark; that I am convinced of. It's the most improbable story in the world and I've been no end of a fool to let it trouble me so. Whoever she was or is I'll never know—and I'm to get her out of my head. Well, tomorrow, I'll go back to work in dead earnest. Nothing like work to lay ghosts."

He arose and picked up his paddle again. There was all the lake yet to cross to the club and he realized all at once how tired he had become, how his limbs ached in his damp clothes, and how keen he had grown for Narcisse's fresh, broiled trout and griddle-cakes. The shadows ran far out and swiftly across the placid water, now lying glassy and motionless in the shelter of the steep shore, and it was in the soft sudden northern twilight that Warrender reached the farther side and headed for the point which stood between him and the club.

From afar he marked the huge

shoulder of the hill breaking down in successive ledges to the shore and running out a long beak into the water, like the ram of a monster battle-ship, and upon nearing it he noticed a sudden patch of white standing out clearly against the dark background of the cliff—a patch which moved up and down uncertainly and came close to the water's edge. He concluded this must be one of the intruders into his paradise, and, in disgust, he headed away.

A faint hail reached him across the intervening water; he saw the figure waving something excitedly. It was most obviously for the purpose of attracting his attention, as he could not discover any other craft about, and he was too close to pretend to ignore the signal, as he desired to do, so he sheered shorewards again. As he approached through the fading light, he saw that the person signaling was a girl, seated now and watching him silently, as he dexterously slipped the canoe alongside the rock until it bumped and grated at her feet. He raised his cap, looking up at her.

"I am so sorry to have stopped you," she said, "but I've lost my canoe. Could you please take me back to the club?"

Young Warrender must have started. The frail craft suddenly rocked and bumped harshly. He stared at her, struck into stone—stared and stared in stunned amazement. From out the dark of a million ages her voice came to him and all the world whirled backward beneath him. The twilight had changed swiftly to impenetrable night and a stray breeze in the trees far above him roared with the sound of escaping steam.

She stood over him, surprised at his wide stare and his long silence, taking his behavior to mean a sulkily refusal, or, at best, ungracious compliance. Then young Warrender laughed softly, while his mind swung from the blankness of intense bewilderment to the extreme of complete relief and understanding—full stroke. When he found his voice its tones did not sound like

his own at all, and his mouth was quite dry.

"Why, yes. Oh, why—rather. If I—if I can be of any service—I shall be very glad—glad indeed."

The girl paused irresolutely. His manner was certainly very strange and he appeared to have great difficulty with his breathing. She almost feared to trust herself to him, and yet she could not remain all night marooned on the rock.

"Aren't you Mr. Warrender?" she asked at length, seeking some assurance.

"Yes, I am—of course." Young Warrender subdued the wild hammering of his pulses. "How did you know? And, of course, I'll take you back to the club. Please allow me."

"They told me at the club that Mr. Warrender was the only person on the preserve up here, so I thought you must be he. You see, I was scrambling about up here on the cliff to watch the sunset and never thought of watching the canoe. I couldn't have pulled it up far enough out of the water, and when I came down again it was gone. The breeze must have carried it away. So I was in a most awkward fix and didn't know what I was going to do, when I luckily saw you paddling across the lake, and waved to stop you. It's very good of you, indeed."

Young Warrender steadied the canoe as she stepped in. "I'm very fortunate to be happening along when I did," he said, "for you couldn't possibly get back by going over the hill. It's far too dense an undergrowth."

Fortunate—fortunate, did he call it? Why, time and space since the very beginning of all things had been destined to accomplish just this moment; the cosmic forces for immemorial ages had been working to bring it to pass! How could he ever have doubted? It had been written and ordained, beyond peradventure. And how long was he to keep from shouting his secret for all the world to hear? His paddle strokes rhymed to the thrilling of his blood as he faced her. Even in the thickening darkness, he knew she was

just as she should be—just as he would have her to be, and how long could he refrain from telling her so?

"Mr. Warrender, Narcisse told us you were to have gone away this afternoon," his companion remarked presently. "He seemed quite unhappy that you would not stay."

"Yes, I did, indeed, intend going, but it came to a match of wits between myself and a wise old, gray old trout up in the north inlet, and I couldn't go away beaten. I stayed until I landed him fairly."

The appalling horror of the thought that if he had given up and come back earlier, as he had planned to do, the night before, almost overwhelmed him. The one and only chance in all his life would have been missed and gone forever. He quickly resolved that that same gray old trout should be saved from the griddle then and there; the part he had played so worthily entitled him to a better reward, and he should be stuffed and repose within the sheltering walls of a glass case in undisturbed calm, with no false, alluring flies to fret his peace. His companion's voice broke in again upon these thoughts.

"I'm so glad you didn't burn down the club, too." She laughed merrily. "Narcisse informed me that you threatened to when he told you our party was coming up. Such heroic measures, too—like Moscow and the invading Napoleon. Did we appear so terrifying?"

Young Warrender felt himself blushing hotly, and was thankful for the dark.

"Yes, that was rather a shabby thought of mine, but Narcisse shouldn't have rounded on me like that. You see, I had been having such an unalloyed rest up here by myself, I'm afraid, in my first impatience, I may have felt that strangers would spoil everything. It was selfish of me, I'll admit, and I'm sorry. You understand, don't you?"

"Oh, don't apologize, please, or I shall have to confess on my own account to a quite similar feeling of disappointment when I heard, on our

arrival, that a strange young man was here. There, we've both been candid about it, haven't we? And I am the more overcome with shame because you've been of such real, substantial service to me the very first time we've met. That's the funny part of it."

"Yes, it is funny—a little." Young Warrender stared out ahead of him as he spoke. If she only knew what he knew, that this wasn't the first time they had met—if he only could tell her. It was funny, certainly.

Across the bay two lights burned steadily, cutting wide swathes in the gloom, to mark where the landing pontoon thrust out from the shore and laid down two pathways of shimmering gold across the black, unstirring water, and, as the darkness deepened, hiding the one from the other, it seemed as though a veil had dropped between them and stopped their frank intercourse. During the rest of the way to the club neither spoke a word; young Warrender, in the hurry and turmoil of his own thoughts as he grappled with the new situation forced upon him so suddenly, never noticing the silence which had checked his companion's conversation.

They reached the landing stage and paced the short path up the bank through the dense brush to the clearing on which the club stood, and young Warrender excused himself before reaching it, on the plea of arranging with Narcisse about his things, and so wished her good-night. His ear caught the unwonted sound of laughter and voices from the veranda, and the little halos from cigar-ends in the gloom warned him away, for he feared to face any of his own kind that night, lest his manner and speech should betray the exulting in his blood. For the impossible had been brought to pass—the miracle had been performed—the vision had become the fact. He had found her—the central star of his thoughts and hopes and dreams for so many days, and, finding her, he knew he could never face losing her again. He loved her, had loved her always, beyond all argument or dispute.

Apart from all dictates of reason or common sense, above all challenging of ridicule, he loved her, and all the wide vault of heaven above him echoed that night with the music of it, until the very farthest star seemed singing.

While sanity remained he did two things of importance. First he dashed off a note to Stanhope to be taken to the station in the morning, telling him of the wonderful thing which had been brought to pass, for he felt he had to share the secret with someone, even with such an open skeptic and unbeliever as Stanhope; then he found Narcisse and countermanded his order for leaving indefinitely. All imperative reminders of business neglected and duties unperformed were disregarded, waved away into deepest oblivion. There were things to his hand to be done of more value than anything awaiting him in the city, and young Warrender was not one to be backward in the doing of them.

His night was divided between his room, thrashing about on his bed, and the lawn before the club, where he paced silently and rapt, watching the planets wheel and flame in stately procession across the midnight immensity above, and the intense stillness of the hills soothed the wild tumult of his pulses. Toward morning the reaction carried him off, and the early sun found him sleeping soundly as it cleared the hill-top and smote him across the face through the open window. It was, in very truth, a new earth upon which he looked, and new inhabitants thereof to whom he was presented upon coming in to breakfast; but, beyond that the white-headed gentleman was Judge Ashley, of Washington—which conferred upon him no particular distinction—and the father of Miss Ashley—which did—he retained no lasting impression of the strangers. They simply came upon the stage as supers; necessary to the setting but not essential to the action of the piece.

Thenceforward these two entered in upon their rightful inheritance. "Give

me youth and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous," and they had youth a-plenty in all its opulent bravery, and many generous days of ardent Springtime, and would have made no traffic with principalities or powers. They fished, fought and flirted with young and candid hearts, and found each succeeding day more glorious and worthy. They canoed, walked and climbed, exploring hill and forest and laying open to inquisitive eyes the rough, rugged beauty of that wild, Northern land. When the mists hung upon the shoulders of the scarred hills, weaving, winnowing, dispersing and regathering, as though to hide their bareness in pity, and the rain fell in a shimmering gray veil over the lakes; when the dawn-sun struck the waters into unspeakable, fleckless gold, and the winds whispered of the magic of his coming; and when the moon swung intense and radiant across the heavens and shadowed all the world in mystery, they were together.

They did not lose sight, however, of the primary reason of their presence there, which gave them infinite opportunity to dispute over the merits of Parmacheene Belle and Montreal and Scarlet Ibis as successful lures for trout, young Warrender having the hardihood to flout many of her most cherished flies, earning for himself one whole day's coldness and disdain by speaking slightly of Jock Scotts and Silver Doctors. For they were as children again, and young Warrender's mind had been wiped clean of his tormenting memories, and his old unrest and trouble of spirit had dropped away from him.

He had a wire from Stanhope: "Coming up tonight. Got some news for you," and had blithely consigned Stanhope to an eternity of various and assorted torments for interfering, although sober reason convinced him, after a while, that perhaps Stanhope could hardly be blamed for considering he still had some rights in his own club.

That day he and Miss Ashley had

neglected the fish and gone wandering through the bush along an old, disused, long-forgotten portage, almost blocked with wind-falls, until they stumbled upon a tumbling, turbulent mountain creek. Fighting down the keen, swift regret which assailed them, as true disciples, at having left their rods behind, they scrambled and climbed by beaver-meadows and falls of creamy lace-work to the source. Then a crag challenged them, and when conquered, yet another, and then a mountain shoulder loomed over them and they cheered and dashed for it and won out upon a bare plateau of rock which showed them all the glories of the earth in forest, lake and hill, flecked by flying cloud-shadows, and young Warrender, watching his companion more than the landscape, could have fallen down and worshiped in the very body. They were late in getting home, for the beauty of the panorama held them. They came through the scented dusk back to the club with Springtime magic working havoc in their blood, as is Springtime's immemorial way.

Later in the evening young Warrender and Stanhope were pacing up and down the lawn before the club-house. The night had settled down, cool and still and fragrant, and the wide, windless spaces of the air were luminous with the promise of the moon. The former's excitement showed in the way he kept lighting cigarettes and letting them go out again, flicking them away into the shrubbery. Stanhope puffed steadily at his pipe.

"Now, out with your news," cried young Warrender, as they faced about at the end of the walk. "But admit, gracefully, first of all, that you were entirely wrong in laughing at me when I told you my story. 'Fess up. It's good for the soul, and I'll be lenient."

"I certainly never laughed, Warry. Come, now."

"No—perhaps, not laugh aloud, but you certainly ridiculed the whole business in your sleeve. Though it was so confoundedly impossible I can hardly blame you, I suppose."

"Oh, I'm not here to make any confessions or own up to any mistakes, that I'm aware of," retorted Stanhope easily. "I came up to tell you something which will interest you a good deal—so much so, that I thought I should rather like to be around when I told you, instead of writing."

"Well, fire away, then. Don't try to keep the secret any longer than you have to, you know. You swell visibly when you do and you don't look particularly pretty."

"First of all, you're not serious about what you wrote me in your letter, about this—er, Miss Ashley?"

"Serious? Well, I should just think I was."

"And you are quite sure, then, that she is the woman who went through that night in the train wreck with you last January—quite, quite sure? I hardly thought you'd back up your letter this way, and that showed you hadn't a shadow of doubt in your own mind—but you seem even more confident now. You are absolutely, positively certain, then? You haven't much to go on, you know."

"Yes, I know I haven't much, Stan, but she is the girl none the less. What are you getting at?" Young Warrender faced him in the pale light and his forehead showed wrinkles of earnestness as he said it.

"Ah—have you mentioned it to her yet?"

"No—not yet. Why?"

"Are you going to tell her? She never suspects a thing, I suppose?"

"Certainly I am."

"Well, I wouldn't."

"You wouldn't?" young Warrender flung out sharply. "And why not? What is it?"

"Because she wasn't there."

"Not—not there? Nonsense, Stanhope. You're crazy. That's blank foolish nonsense. How the deuce do you know anything about it, anyway?"

"Now, don't fly off the handle that way," Stanhope replied evenly, "and I'll tell you. One day last week I happened to notice Macdonald, the passenger agent of that railway, lunch-

ing at the club, and I sat down with him, as he was alone. In the course of time I mentioned that accident casually, saying I had known someone who had been on the train that night—in fact, gave your name, which he remembered perfectly. He had all the particulars at his fingers' ends, and when I asked him if any women had been injured or killed he astonished me by saying that there hadn't been a woman at all in either of the sleeping-cars that night. He was positive about it, too, but to oblige me we went down to his office together, and the entire file of papers and reports bearing on the matter was turned up for my inspection. The conductors of the cars were also sent for and examined before me, and it was definitely and unmistakably proved to my complete satisfaction and everyone else's who might have thought otherwise that such was the case. Now, what do you say?"

Young Warrender flung his cigarette away and spun round on Stanhope angrily.

"Say—I say that you and Macdonald and the conductors and everyone else are all wrong—that's all. Wrong—wrong, wrong, Stanhope!"

"You admit no possibility of having made some mistake yourself, then, old man?"

"There can't be any," young Warrender broke out wrathfully. "Her voice as I heard it that night has been ringing in my head for all these months and when she called to me out on the lake I knew it at once, beyond all chance of mistake."

"Careful, Warry. You're losing your hold on common sense. In face of facts——"

In their stroll they had come back to the club again and the sound of voices from the veranda warned Stanhope to hold his own until they should have passed on. Their feet made no sound on the thick turf and the shadows held them secure. They heard the judge's deep voice:

"How she lived through it all, I don't know. When I hear it spoken of, even yet, I grow cold all over and

shiver from fright. The cars simply piled themselves on top of her, and she was taken out unharmed."

Stanhope ceased to breathe entirely and young Warrender's fingers, clutching at his shoulders, dug into his flesh.

"How perfectly awful!"—a woman's voice gasped sympathetically from the group on the veranda. "Just where was it, judge?"

"Coming up from Palm Beach to Washington last January—New Year's Eve, in fact. But here she comes, so I mustn't mention any more about it. It always unsettles her, even yet."

Young Warrender was chanting over and over again in Stanhope's ear. "New Year's Eve—New Year's Eve. The very same night."

"Where's Mr. Warrender? Anybody seen Mr. Warrender?" Miss Ashley called from the head of the steps. "Oh, there you are. I'm ready now."

She saw him in the shadow of the trees and came down the pathway to him. The full light of the moon was upon her, and young Warrender moved away swiftly to meet her.

"Here I am. Been waiting hours and hours. What are the orders for tonight? Where away?"

"Oh, anywhere, everywhere. This is a very pearl of nights. 'In such a night did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew.'" She faced him smiling and young Warrender answered headily, his words following swift on hers.

"'In such a night did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well——'"

"'Stealing her soul with many vows of faith——' Come."

And Stanhope, standing back, watched them disappear hand in hand down the moon-flecked pathway to the boat-house, and the Springtime moved in his own pulses strongly as he looked, and he found his pipe gave him no comfort.

"Now of all the illogical, foolish——" but he never finished. He went up, instead, to swap fishing yarns with the judge, in proof of his own supremely unassailable logical position.

JUDGE NOT

By Leila Burton Wells

“**B**E kind to Ferrol!”

Her husband's words came home to Mrs. Lowe with a touch of remembered bitterness, as she leaned back in the bow of the little sail-boat and examined the faces of the two men before her.

They were faces worth observing—touched by time with unerring imprints of characterization. Ferrol's eyes, narrowed and backgrounded by hair-lines of laughter, looked out on the world with a sort of tolerant raillery, as if he would consider nothing very seriously. He was a well-made man, with the kind of athletic grace women admire, and a dashing, buoyant carriage. His lips were thin, but the expression of his mouth was inexpressibly sweet.

With an unbreathed sigh Mrs. Lowe turned her eyes to her husband's profile, set in its usual mask of thoughtful sternness. The contours were rugged, as if effect had been considered more than perfection of detail. Yet the face was beautiful, though its beauty did not invite, but rather aroused a furtive fear. Elemental strength lay crouching behind its stirless calm, and there was in every lineament a hint of dormant power.

Mrs. Lowe was afraid of her husband. She could not remember when she had not been afraid of him—afraid of some monstrous passion which lay hidden in his great frame and which she had never yet aroused.

Captain Lowe had not found time for the smaller things of life; in love, as in everything else, he rose only to the supreme issue. The trifling, every-day foibles which mean much, I might say

all, to a woman, he treated with uncomprehending contempt.

Evelyn Lowe trembled as she looked. How often had she not bruised herself against the granite of that unyielding nature! What centuries of wounded pride, growing resentment, and most hideous pain she had crowded into the short years of her married life!

Flushing with the beautiful unworthiness of first love, she had held out to him in two gracious hands her tenderest illusions, and he had taken them from her and crushed them one by one. They lay all about her, shattered and trampled.

There was the one she had had most faith in—comradeship—which had died hardest. Her husband had not been able to admit a woman into the inner sanctuary of his mind. He was tolerantly amused at her pitiful efforts to creep closer to his thoughts, to make herself as one worth his pleasures. Evelyn could never quite forget the quiet and inexorable closing of that door—her face paled at the memory.

How far from him in spirit she had walked after the first year! It is so easy for a man to lay aside his little lover-like ways, and so difficult for a woman. She clings with the strength of desperation to each visible sign of the love she covets, dying a fresh death with every act of careless forgetfulness, every indifferent word and perfunctory touch.

Evelyn Lowe had been in her girlhood rather spoiled by over-loving. She was beautiful, with a quaint, sweet loveliness which appealed to men like the perfume of an unhandled rose. She

had enchanting, imperious ways, and a voice as tender as the caress of a mother's hand.

Fluttering through her girlhood in an army post, surrounded by men who seemed to know no law in life save her law, she had had so many lovers that love had lost a little of its value, as a thing easily gained and seldom lost.

When she gave herself to Langdon Lowe, it was with the conscious knowledge of the value of the gift. She had been so much desired that it never occurred to her that her value could lessen with possession; yet it was just that contingency which she had had to face.

That her husband loved her, at times she doubted partially; never wholly. Like a strain of insistent music, whose cloying sweetness she could never quite neglect, the golden days of their courtship would rise before her and she would again be trembling with ecstasy in his arms.

It was not that he had ceased to love, simply that he did not understand, and had underestimated her part in the drama of married life. A man very seldom realizes the inadequacy of what he gives until it is too late. He is then ready to empty his storehouse when there is no longer anyone to receive his riches, or care whether they are doled out with a grudging or a lavish hand.

As Evelyn Lowe stared under the shadow of her parasol at her husband's unconscious face, she told herself that the time had at last come when she hated him.

It had been slow in coming. It had taken three long tortuous years, but at last she was facing it—and he did not know! From his standpoint their life together had been happy.

She smiled bitterly to herself as she recalled his words to her when his classmate had joined the regiment—"Be kind to Ferrol."

Well, she had been kind—and what was to be the end of it?

She wanted her freedom! As she sat quietly staring out at the sensuous tropical world sinking softly into the waiting arms of twilight, she thought

that she wanted her freedom more than anything in this world or the next.

To escape from the constant hurt and pain of her every-day life—that was what she wanted. Tenderness awaited her just beyond. Her eyes measured Ferrol's face, and a warm, comforting glow settled about her heart. He would understand; there lay the keynote of the situation. If he hurt her it would be consciously, with malice aforethought. She would never have to battle against a belittling preoccupation, a freezing kindness. He was made in a smaller mold than that other who had absorbed all her horizon and selfishly forgotten that her light came through him. Ferrol would never be a great man, but he held happiness in his hand. He offered her all those things she starved for—sympathy, tenderness, companionship. And her husband—

His name was so near her lips that she started when he addressed her suddenly—started and flushed guiltily.

"Put down your parasol," he was saying, in his studiously cold voice. "You are missing the sunset—and it is in the way!"

Ferrol leaned forward. "Let me," he said, and took it from her hand.

Evelyn smiled. "How nice you are," she murmured, turning her beautiful, mournful eyes to his. "You never let me do anything for myself. Langdon has my cushion," addressing her husband petulantly. "Give it to Mr. Ferrol. Do you want all the good things in the world?" with unconcealed bitterness.

Captain Lowe smiled and passed over the little Japanese mat. He was occupied with the sail at the moment and neglected to answer her question.

"We are a good mile and a half from Los Banos," he observed after a short silence, glancing at his wrist-watch and comparing it interestedly with the declining sun.

"We won't reach home before eleven; will you need a wrap?" turning his grave eyes to his wife's face.

"Mr. Ferrol kindly remembered and brought his cape," shortly.

Again her tone was a rebuke, and again it passed unnoticed.

Her husband had turned his head to watch the rare picture nature had uncovered for their benefit. Beyond the blue hills and beyond the silver water hung the gaudy curtain of the sky, splotted with a blood-red sun—a sun crowned and panoplied with dizzy gold and surrounded by clouds pink as a maiden's cheeks, and streaming ribbons of blue that might have bound the strands of a maiden's hair.

Low over the Laguna hung the purple-blossomed Aurora, brushing the solemn waters with star-shaped leaves. Cool and sweet were the shadows near the shore, and cool the green pollen that swam like moss on the surface. Under the mirrored water, swaying tortuously back and forth, crouched the long, ravenous weeds which give the Laguna the name of being the most treacherous sheet of water in all the Philippines.

Evening was approaching with gentle, noiseless footsteps. Stealthily she dropped her cool gray skirts over the rice paddys and threw flirtatious shadows on the banana palms. She touched with dusky fingers the fire-trees, and lo! they no longer burned, but stretched gaunt, black arms across the hills. The moon vines, hearing her whispered voice, burst into silvery bloom and hung, round and white, from the branches of the trees. Like a beloved mistress whose caresses are sweetest at twilight, she stretched out her comforting arms and gathered the weary world to the heaven of her breast.

Eyelyn's eyes instinctively followed her husband's. In the days of love, nature had been a revelation to her, but now its beauty was a constant reminder that she had missed the essence of life. If under such a sky she could have stretched out her hand to another hand surely waiting her with its clasp of understanding and sympathy—

She dared not look toward Ferroll, for in that moment she felt that her soul lay bare, and she had tried to shield it with what pitiful covering she had. He did not know his power, for she had

fought a long fight, and, though it was near the close and she was ready to capitulate, she shrank from the accomplishing moment. A strange, prophetic reticence against surrender possessed her.

What was restraining her? Habit, convention, fear? She did not know. Her loyalty to her husband had been a very wonderful thing, and even in its decay it found strength to bind.

Her life had become hateful, but the promises that life had once made still held a potent charm.

In the silent watches of the night the wrongs she had suffered looked so intolerable that she pictured herself in a courageous vision rising up to cast off the burdensome garment of her married life. Young, free, light-hearted—she saw the world in its old light as a playground of pleasure, not as a pathway of pain.

She could be young again so easily. Only five years lay between her and her girlhood. And then, with the enticing smile of a deliverer, Ferrol would beckon her on—Ferrol, the tender, the thoughtful, the infinitely patient.

She turned her eyes to the immutable mountains, looming solemnly silent under the gaudy sky. There in those sweet green hills, under the kiss of a furious sun, creatures lived and loved as savages must—naturally. No conventions bound them in loathsome union; no galling chains cut into their flesh. They were free—free! She stretched out her hands with a little impulsive gesture, and something that lay in her lap which she had been slipping on and off her finger, fell with a clinking clatter to the floor. Both men stooped to recover it, but her husband raised it in his hand.

It was her wedding-ring. He looked at it in surprised silence for a moment, and then, reaching for her hand, quietly and determinedly put it back into its place, saying rebukingly, "You should be more careful. It might have slipped into the water." And he frowned.

"Might it?" she laughed, with hysterical bravado. "I don't think it is so easily lost. Look how it has worn

my finger away! It is too heavy," petulantly. "They make them lighter now."

"Yes," answered her husband, with a little amused smile, "they make them lighter now—but I doubt if they are as serviceable rings." Then, with a quick change of tone, "Did you remember the luncheon, Evelyn?" The question was put anxiously.

"Did I remember the luncheon?" She lifted her hands to her head and laughed aloud, and then, seeing the surprise in his face, recovered herself and said scornfully: "Do you suppose I would forget such an easy road to a man's heart? Yes, I remembered, but don't make me think of it now; with this sea and sky before me, I want to sail and sail, away and away into the gold of the sunset." She turned her longing eyes toward the west.

Ferrol smiled, and taking off his white cap, he let the breeze blow through his hair, and asked with an uncompleted laugh:

"What would you do when you got there?" leaning forward and trying to meet her eyes.

"What would I do? Buy myself a gown all purple and gold, and a cloak of that deepest pink, and capture a white cloud for a hat!"

He smiled sympathetically. "It seems to me you have a cloud already," he ventured, indicating with a wave of his hand the fluff of white that was poised, like a bird ready to flee, on her fair hair.

"Call you that a cloud?" She reached for it scoffingly. "*This!* Why, I would have scorned to wear it in the States, but in this land where headgear is not plentiful, it assumes a fictitious value. Poor old thing!" turning it around regretfully. "It was once my best beloved, and now it is not worth a peso. How we weary of what we possess."

Ferrol tossed a burnt-out cigar into the water and watched her reflectively.

"It looks very fit to me," he said with quiet indolence. "I'll give you two pesos for it myself!"

She pouted. "What a miser you

are! Only a dollar gold. Why, Langdon will do better than that—won't you?" turning inquiringly to her husband.

A spot of gay color burned in her cheeks, and the failing sun caught the gold in her hair that drooped, Madonna-wise, about her face. She looked very lovely.

Captain Lowe felt in the pockets of his blouse and pulled out a little pile of silver and some crumpled bills.

"I might raise him one just for luck," he answered, smiling.

"One!" scornfully. "I can see that you don't appreciate the value of these things! Why, the milliner's name inside is worth more than that. Mr. Ferrol, I can't believe that you will let this dream go for a miserable three pesos?"

She flirted the snowy nothing around on her hand before his amused eyes.

He gave a gigantic sigh. "It is near the end of the month," he complained, "but I suppose I can put up another dollar. What do you say, Lang?"

Captain Lowe gravely selected a second bill from his pile and laid it with the first.

"I stay in," he remarked laconically, and puffed a ring of smoke up to the sky.

"You do, do you?" Sitting up with sudden dashing eagerness and feeling in his pockets. "What do you say to a raise of five gold?"

Mrs. Lowe stared for a moment and then laughed. "Now," she cried with a little purr of triumph, "now you are talking. I see that you at last realize the value of the article you are bidding for!"

"I'm offered five gold," with a well simulated air of importance. "Make it six," turning to her husband and putting out an imploring hand.

"Six."

"Seven."

"Seven—seven—seven. Make it eight!"

"Eight." A displeased frown had settled between Lowe's eyes, and he looked past the other man at the waiting hills. They were dark and tragic.

"Ten dollars gold," from Ferrol.

Mrs. Lowe gave a little gasp of excitement and addressed her property admiringly: "You didn't think you would ever bring ten dollars gold at second hand—did you, adorable old hat? Going for ten dollars gold—going, going, gon——"

"Fifteen," Lowe leaned quickly forward, looking into her eyes with a light in his that frightened her. "I'll take the hat, Evelyn," he said, and held out his hand.

"Wait," interrupted the other man stubbornly. "I'll raise you five!"

Mrs. Lowe shrank back before the passion in the two faces. The hat fluttered in her hand.

"I think," she said tremulously, "I will keep it myself."

"No!" retorted Lowe, and his voice rang over the silent water in unbridled anger. "No! I will give you twenty dollars—thirty! Is it enough?" turning a white, set face to Ferrol.

"It is enough!" He nodded and tried to laugh, but Lowe reached out an angry hand for the hat. His eyes were narrow and startled. His wife, trembling, tendered the airy trifle of contention, but as she held it out a light and sudden breeze sprang up and snatched it from her. It fluttered like a white bird for an instant, and then, rising, floated far out on the water.

"Oh, my hat, my hat!" she wailed frantically. "Somebody get it—get it quick!"

Both men sprang forward, but it was too late. The current was bearing its worthless treasure to the sea.

Ferrol tore off his coat with quick energy.

"I'll get it," he shouted, laughing. "Watch me make the rescue."

"Don't be a fool!"

Lowe put out a fierce, detaining hand and his eyes were on fire.

They stared at each other for an instant, and then Ferrol shook himself free.

Again the stronger man detained him.

"If anyone goes for that hat—I will go," he said, with surprised passion. "Hold my watch, Evelyn. Sit down,

Ferrol. This is my affair—I desire no interference." And with a great sweep of his mighty arms he plunged into the waiting water.

The two in the boat watched him in stunned silence. The woman's cheeks were white as a pearl, and her heart was fluttering under her thin bodice. The man watched that fluttering furtively. How pure she was, and how beautiful! Her mouth curved at the corners into little plaintive dimples, and the skin on her temples was soft like a very young child's. There, under the shadow of that softly drooping hair, a man might lay his lips. He knotted his hands together until the knuckles showed white through the sunburned flesh. How roughly she had been handled—that white blossom of a woman. Cruel words had brought these shadows in her eyes, and neglectful indifference that pathetic droop to the lovely lips.

Well, his day was near—his day and hers. He would bear her far away where no rough voice should startle her or cold hand caress—

He suddenly leaned forward as if to touch that hand on which the wedding-ring was glittering hatefully, but the woman's eyes were turned away. She was watching the rescue of her hat.

Lowe had caught it and was waving it aloft in triumph. He was swimming quite easily with one arm, his dark head the only spot on the silent water.

Instinctively the two in the boat turned and looked into each other's eyes.

It was such a little thing—that speck upon the water—and it was all that lay between them and happiness. One puny life. A wave might wash over it, or a weed entangle it, and then——

Mrs. Lowe turned ashen, as the thought found lodgment in her brain. To what depths had she not sunk, she who had held herself so high! With a burning flush she put out her hands to cover her face, when, suddenly, up to the smiling heavens a cry was borne—the fearful, strangled cry of a strong man in mortal fear!

The frivolous white hat had fluttered

from her husband's grasp and he struggled in the water with all a demon's strength.

Ferrol sprang to his feet and then, like a flash, turned—paused—and looked into her eyes.

Silently he asked a question, and for one fearful degrading moment she hesitated, and then something seemed to snap in her brain and she gave a long moan as of one who has looked with uncovered eyes at death.

"Go!" she panted, screaming and pushing him with her hands. "Go! go!"

And Ferrol went.

She watched him as he swam out—far out—not with the steady, strong stroke of that other, but in quick, uneven spurts. Did it mean the end for both? Must she stand still and watch them die? Had she sent them both to eternity?

She stumbled toward the tiller and tried to turn the boat, but the breeze was fitful. She snatched an oar and began to paddle with frenzied haste. A red light zigzagged before her eyes. She would never see anything but red again, she who had had murder in her heart!

Her husband—her own—the core of her heart, the pulse of her lips. She had had to see him in death's hands to know! What did it matter whether he tortured her, or neglected her, or made her life hideous? She was bound to him as closely as the petal is bound to the rose. She had been willing that he should die! She had looked into that other man's eyes and—*hesitated!*

"O God!" she wailed, mumbling the words on her white lips, "be merciful! Don't let me be that unnamable thing—spare him, only spare him and punish—me—all—the rest—of my—life—"

She rocked back and forth and hid her eyes that she might not see those two in the water; that she might not see—

Ferrol was swimming slowly. His passion had taken his breath. The current swept him along.

He could see that Lowe was still

holding his own and he called out to him encouragingly, and lunged forward, but it was slow work. Leaden weights seemed to be tied to his feet—and now and then the furry top of a water-rush touched him. He was swimming too near the shore for safety. He swept his arms out with desperate strength just as something caught his foot. He struggled, panted, choked a moment, and then—lost his presence of mind. If he sank it was the end! He heard, as in a dream, a rough voice saying, "And poor devil, we found him four days later tangled in the rushes at the bottom of the Laguna. He didn't have a ghost of a chance from the beginning."

Ferrol fought and cried out. When had he heard those words? They should not kill him, they were only words. He struggled as if he were fighting off some beast of prey, but it was no use. Down, down, down into eternity. He had not thought it was such a long way. . . .

The lap of the water was sweet against his cheek; it was like a woman's kiss. When had a woman kissed him? It must have been long ago. The water was choking his brain and he could not think. Ah, he knew now—it was his mother's kiss he remembered; and her hand rocking his cradle—back and forth, back and forth. What a heavenly mother! And that was her voice crooning him a lullaby. She was telling him to go to sleep. He struggled a little, as children often will—and then, with a smile of utter content, closed his eyes. . . .

Lowe, battling with all his superb strength against the current, saw him sink. He turned toward the spot, swimming with almost superhuman effort, but his muscle was nothing to that relentless tide, that filled him with the only terror he had ever known. His staring eyes searched the silver water with breathless terror. *Ferrol was nowhere to be seen!* The Laguna had devoured another victim, and the cruel waters lay silently hugging their fearful secret.

Lowe looked in desperation to the tiny boat coquettishly flirting its sail in the wind. It scarcely moved. Would she never come? Must he share Ferrol's weedy grave? . . . He shouted with all his remaining strength, his bloodshot eyes fixed on that white hope. Why did she not come? He saw her standing straight and tall in the bow of the boat. His wife! What would heaven be without her? Without those slender feet that had walked beside his in beautiful harmony through the years! She had made him so happy, so happy, and he was losing her. He called again and again and, breathing hard, settled down to fight for his life. He would not die while her arms waited for him. Ferrol had died, but then there was nothing to hold him, poor devil. No one to care, no one to mourn. He was glad that there was no one to mourn. . . .

He closed his eyes to rest a moment, when suddenly an angel's voice called. It came from far off, being faint and sweet. He wanted to sleep, but it called and called, and then, without warning of any kind, as he opened his eyes, something white hovered over him and straining arms clasped and lifted him up.

He gave a mighty shout and raised himself. The mist cleared from before his eyes and his hands touched something solid! It was wood! His wet fingers closed on it like talons, and he struggled like a crazy man, but still those wonderful, restraining arms held

him. He did not know how long they held him, and he scarcely marveled at their almost superhuman strength, when they lifted him up and dragged him into the bottom of the boat; and he lay there staring into his wife's white face.

It was paler than he had ever seen it; and the eyes burned like two lights before a sanctuary. And he stared, and stared—as if he had seen something very strange and beautiful. Presently she knelt down sobbingly, and brushed the wet hair from his eyes, and put her face against his face, and her lips against his eyelids in the old, sweet way, and he could feel the beating of her heart, and the brushing softness of her hair on his throat.

With a mighty effort he opened his lips to speak, as he could speak at a supreme moment, to tear his heart open and bid her look; but she shrank from him as if he had struck her, and put a terrified hand over his lips.

"Wait!" she wailed, shuddering. "Wait!"

And like a guilty thing she crouched down at his feet, she who should have stood so high; and in little strangled gasps, and choking sobs, and pitiful whispers, she moaned forth her confession—all, everything.

And as she spoke, the sun fell with tragic suddenness into the water, and darkness came over the world, and a bleak wind blew up; and he, without an answering word, stared into her face, listening dumbly



STEAM HEAT NECESSARY

H **ESTON**—Your janitor seems to have a very sunny disposition.

R **RANDALL**—Yes, but that doesn't keep the flat warm.



H **IGGS**—Was your wife's last party a success?

B **IGGS**—Great! There was such a frightful blizzard that not one soul showed up, and she has decided never to give another.

THE SUBTERFUGE

By Mabel Herbert Uner

Williamson, A. D., *Insurance*.
Williamson, Albert J., *Clerk*.
Williamson, Arthur F., *Dentist*.
Williamson, Austin G., *Waiter*.
Williamson, B. C., *Plumber*.
Williamson, Benj. E., *Tailor*.
Williamson, C. A., *Lawyer*.

C. A. WILLIAMSON—yes, that was it. She felt sure that it was. She seemed to remember now that the initials were C. A. And the address—she leaned over the directory again—Bond Building, 138 Nassau street; that, too, seemed familiar.

A feeling of great relief came to her, now that she had found it. That she was all alone in New York and had lost her one letter of introduction would not have mattered so seriously, had it not happened that she had only personal cheques, with no one to identify her but this Mr. Williamson. He was a lawyer, a friend of her own lawyer at home, who had given her the letter of introduction.

The letter had been in the hand-bag she had lost on the train, and she could remember only that the name was Williamson. But now it was all right; the initials and address seemed so familiar, there could be no doubt about it. She closed the directory and nodded her thanks to the drug-clerk as she passed out.

Outside, she stood for a moment on the curb, gazing down the crowded street; the endless lines of cars, cabs and wagons—a great stream of traffic that swept by with its clang and roar.

She felt an inclination to laugh at the sight of a man standing on the most crowded corner selling "The Simple

Life" at five cents a copy. The simple life on a downtown corner of Broadway!

A half-hour later she was in the rotunda of a great office building in Nassau street, studying the floor directory near the entrance.

"Express to sixteenth floor," shouted the guard as she was entering the nearest elevator.

"Room 1218?" she asked.

"Twelfth floor, miss; take next elevator."

"Room 1218, to your right," directed the man as she stepped off at the twelfth floor. She turned to the right, down a long corridor lined with glass doors.

1202, "Paving Cement Co.," was the first door. 1204, "Commercial Agency." 1206, "Phoenix Woolen Mills Co." A door marked "Private." A few doors with no lettering at all, and then 1218, "C. A. Williamson, Attorney & Counsellor at Law."

She knocked timidly. There was no response, only the sound of a clicking typewriter within. She waited a moment and then opened the door. A girl rose from a typewriter as she entered.

"I should like to see Mr. Williamson, if he is in."

"Mr. Williamson has just come in. I will take him your card."

A moment later the girl returned. "Mr. Williamson will see you," she said. "Please come this way."

It was a luxuriously furnished office, and a man sat at a desk by the window; he held her card in his hand.

"Miss Craig?" he said inquiringly.

She held out her hand impulsively. "Yes; Mr. Collins wrote you that I

would be here yesterday, but I lost your address and have just succeeded in finding you."

"Er—ah—won't you be seated? There seems to be some mistake."

"Oh! You—you are *not* Mr. Williamson?"

He smiled. "Yes, I am Mr. Williamson, but I am afraid I am not the Mr. Williamson you are seeking."

"Oh, pardon me." She rose hurriedly. "I see—I have made a very stupid blunder. I looked in the directory and the first lawyer I came to under the name of Williamson I felt sure was the one. I am sorry to have troubled you—I hope you will pardon the intrusion." She was turning toward the door.

"It has been no intrusion, I assure you. Perhaps I can help you. Won't you sit down again and tell me something about it?"

She hesitated.

"There are a number of Williamsons who are lawyers in New York. I presume you noticed my name because my initials are C. A., and would come alphabetically before the others. The telephone book," he took one down from the top of his desk, "would be better for your purpose than the directory. If he is a lawyer he has a telephone and you will not have to wade through so many names."

He turned to "Williamson" in the book and ran his pencil down the column.

"Now, here," checking them off, "are the lawyers. Suppose you look over them and see if anyone seems more familiar than the others."

She took the book and glanced over the checked names.

"Oh," with a glad little laugh, "I hadn't thought of that. Why, that makes it very simple; I can't help finding him that way. And I was becoming very much worried, for I have only personal cheques and no one else to identify me. I will go down to a drug store and telephone at once."

"You can telephone from here, or if you will allow me I will do it for you."

"Oh, thank you, but I should not want to take so much of your time."

"It will take only a few minutes, and I shall be glad to help you."

He pushed aside some papers and drew the desk telephone toward him.

"What did you say your lawyer's name was, the one who gave you this letter to Mr. Williamson?"

"Mr. Collins—J. R. Collins."

"And you are sure this Mr. Williamson will recognize the name at once?"

"Oh, yes; they are old friends, I believe."

He was looking over the list in the telephone book. "D. W. Williamson, 36 Bond street—we will try him first."

He took down the receiver. "Hello, 1247 Cortlandt."

A moment's silence.

"Hello! Is this Mr. Williamson's office? . . . Yes, I would like to speak to him."

Another silence. "Hello! Is this Mr. Williamson? My name is Williamson, too—C. A. Williamson of 138 Nassau street. There is a lady here in my office looking for a Mr. Williamson. She had a letter of introduction from her lawyer in Wisconsin—J. B. Collins, of Middletown, Wisconsin. She lost the letter and can't remember the initials or address. I wonder if you could be the man? . . . No? . . . No, she can't remember the initials. . . . Yes, that is what I am doing—calling them all up . . . Yes," with a little laugh, "the Williamsons are pretty thick, and a number of them seem to have gone in for the law. . . . Yes, that's all. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver and took up the telephone book again.

"The next is F. L. Williamson, patent lawyer."

"Oh, he is not a patent lawyer—I am sure of that."

"Well, that simplifies things some. Then the next is G. W. Williamson, 424 Wall street."

He took down the receiver again. "Hello, hello, Central! Give me 1468 John. . . . Hello! I want to speak to Mr. Williamson. . . .

What's that? When will he be back? When? Not until Friday. . . . Well, do you know if he has any business relations with a lawyer in Middletown, Wisconsin—J. R. Collins? Yes, Collins—J. R. Collins. . . . How's that? A letter from Mr. Collins now? Well, that's all right then. Yes, Friday morning. . . . That's all. Good-bye."

He turned to her, smiling. "Well, we have found him. That was his secretary. He says there is a letter on Mr. Williamson's desk now, from this Mr. Collins. Mr. Williamson is at Hot Springs; it seems that he has rheumatic gout and has been there for several weeks, but is expected back Friday. Will it inconvenience you very much if you cannot see him until then? You spoke of having only personal cheques."

"Yes, but I can easily wait until Friday."

"Well, in case he should not come Friday, and you find yourself embarrassed in any way for lack of money, if you bring your cheques down here I shall take pleasure in introducing you at the Trust Company where I bank. I think we can arrange there to cash your cheques and open an account. I am sailing for Liverpool Monday, or I should be glad to offer my future services. But if I can serve you before then I shall be most happy."

She held out her hand. "You have been very kind, and if Mr. Williamson should not return, I shall be glad to accept your assistance about the cheques."

Outside, as she waited for the elevator, she was conscious of a vague feeling of depression. She had found the Mr. Williamson she was seeking—he was at Hot Springs with rheumatic gout. A rheumatic, gouty old man! How differently she had pictured him!

"Café to the right," read a glittering sign as she left the elevator. She would have luncheon here, it was so far back to the hotel. A marble corridor led from the rotunda to the brilliantly lighted café. She was surprised at the luxurious splendor of the place,

the mirror-lined walls and the palms. It might be the dining-hall of some great hotel and not merely a café in an office building.

A waiter led her to a table and placed before her two leather-bound cards—a menu and a wine-list. She gave her order of bouillon and salad, and then took up the wine-card. Her knowledge of wine was limited to the very mild claret punch served at the semi-monthly meetings of the Middletown "Shakespeare Circle" and the Current Events Club. But now—now she was in New York! It was a pleasant little thrill of excitement that came to her as she glanced over the list. The strange names bewildered her. Claret, port and sherry were the only wines she knew, and she could find none of them on this card.

"A pint of Sauterne or a little Rhine wine, ma'am?" suavely suggested the waiter. "We have some very good Moselle, 1880."

"I think I will take the—the Moselle."

"A pint of Moselle, ma'am? Yes, ma'am."

She leaned back now and gave herself up to a study of the place. It was crowded, mostly with men—alert, keen-looking, typical New York business men. Two of them were passing on their way out.

" Yes, we unloaded ten thousand Colorado Fuel yesterday on talk of the iron merger. The stock was held——"

A waiter rushed by with a bill on a silver tray and laid it before a man at the table in front of her. It was in large black figures that she could easily read—a total of \$3.55. The man glanced up from his paper, drew a leather wallet from his pocket, threw down a note and was instantly engrossed in his paper again. \$3.55 for one man's lunch! And when, a moment later, the waiter brought the change, he stuffed the bills carelessly in his pocket and left the silver on the tray.

" Contracts with the Burlington and the Union Pacific to take

our ore to Pueblo. Our mines are——” came from a near-by table. The rest was lost in the click of glasses and the hum around her.

And this was New York! She had a thrilled sense of being in the heart of things. It was men like these that handled the great business interests of the world.

She thought of the pitiful narrowness of life in Middletown—of the petty, trivial things that made up existence there; the importance that was attached to every paltry thing. The buying of an acre lot for a hundred dollars was a matter requiring weeks of careful consideration. The most prominent and affluent citizen of Middletown would discuss for days the purchase of a new carpet for the “parlor,” or the painting of the front door.

And how she hated it all, with a relentless, intolerant hatred! If it had been only the women—the lives of most women are narrow; but it was the men as well. It was not poverty, for Middletown, for its size, was one of the wealthiest towns in the State. It was not ignorance, for there was much culture there. It was just littleness—a littleness that came from the narrowness of their lives. As no great things ever came to them, they attached importance and greatness to little things.

And now she was in the world, the great, vital world, that she had always longed for—and yet she was no more a part of it than if she had been in Middletown. She was only an outsider—a mere spectator, and within her was that great, hungry craving for some real part in it—to feel that she had some share in it all.

She glanced around at the women in the café. They were all with men—men who had an air of ability and power. She only was alone. A feeling of desolation came over her; a realization of the loneliness, the hopelessness of her position. An absolute stranger in New York, with no opportunities of being anything more. She thought of all the vague dreams she had before she came; how she pictured herself surrounded by journalists, lawyers,

men of affairs—her life a round of dinners, receptions and drives. It had never occurred to her to wonder how all this could be accomplished. She had felt that if she could only come to New York, everything else would follow.

How childish and impracticable her dreams had been. After all, might it not have been better to stay in Middletown and still have the dreams than to come to New York and realize the utter impossibility of it all?

“Pardon me, I believe this is yours.” She glanced up, startled. A man was placing a glove by her plate.

“Oh, thank you—I did not know I had dropped it.”

He bowed and passed on, but not before she had seen the quick admiration in his eyes. She watched him as he passed out, his carriage, the set of his shoulders, the gloves, the cane, the obsequious respect of the waiter, who hurried to open the door for him.

She did not stop to analyze the swift feeling of elation that came to her, nor the impulse that made her turn to the mirror beside her. It was a long, critical glance she gave the reflection there. but when she turned away, it was with shining eyes and flushed cheeks.

With youth, beauty and ambition—surely New York held something for her. How foolish of her to despair so soon, merely because her impracticable dream was not instantly realized. Perhaps when Mr. Williamson returned. . . . In some vague way he had been connected with her dreams. But then came the thought of the Hot Springs and his gout! Oh, if she could only have come to New York with several letters of introduction instead of one. But then she would have lost them, too; they would have been in the hand-bag she left on the train. But if she had lost them—she would have at least remembered the names. She could have looked them up in the directory, as she had looked up Mr. Williamson, and even if she did make mistakes The color rushed to her face with the thought of meeting a number of men as she had met Mr.

Williamson; of the infinite possibilities that might have held for her. If only he were not going abroad! He had seemed deeply interested in her.

And then—then came a thought that drove all the color away, that left her very white with a sick beating of the heart. Why should there not be half a dozen letters of introduction in the hand-bag she had lost? Why not?

There was a fleur-de-lis design in the table-cloth; she had been tracing it carefully with her fork. And now she tightened her hold on the fork and pushed it through the cloth. She drew the fork out and looked at the four round little holes. They were like gaping little wounds.

Why not?

She carefully refitted the prongs of the fork into the tiny holes in the table-cloth.

Why not?

The waiter came by and refilled her wine-glass. Her hand trembled a little as she raised it to her lips. When she put it down again it was empty.

There were six letters of introduction in the hand-bag she had lost! Six. . . Six. . .

Unused to wine, it was surging through her now, strong and sweet, giving a rose-colored enchantment to the thoughts that were crowding through her mind.

Six letters of introduction! What could she not do with six letters—that *were lost!*—that she could remember nothing of but the names. The initials, the address, everything she had forgotten except the names. And the names—they were all names that were common, names that many lawyers in New York would bear. And if six were not sufficient—there might be more! Eight or ten!

A man at a table close by was opening a paper. She caught the flaring headlines: "Beautiful young society woman proved to be an adventuress!" An adventuress. . . An *adventuress*. . . A slow, deep color crept into her face as she repeated the words to herself.

And then, oddly enough, a statement

she had once read flashed before her; a statement of a great and successful man, that "many lives are failures because at some critical moment one fails to grasp or to make an opportunity." To *make* an opportunity!

"Is there anything else you will have, ma'am?" It was the suave voice of the waiter.

"No, that is all."

He deftly cleared the table, brought a finger-bowl and her check. When she passed out through the long marble corridors and up the wide steps to the rotunda again, a strange feeling of elation was thrilling through her. The world seemed to have suddenly become a wonderful place—a place of infinite possibilities. In spite of the wine, her brain was very clear. Swiftly she thought out the details of her plan. She must act quickly or her courage might fail. It was just the lunch hour now and crowds of men and women were pouring from the elevators and surging across the rotunda. The revolving doors were choked with people in their rush to get out. She made her way over to the floor directory. It took only a moment to select six of the most common names and copy them on a card.

She would take them in the order she had copied them. J. R. Morris, Room 1409, fourteenth floor, was the first. She left the elevator at the fourteenth floor, and followed the numbers down the hall to 1409. "J. R. Morris, Attorney at Law." She paused with her hand on the knob. Her heart was beating with sickening rapidity and there was a stifled feeling in her throat.

The knob turned suddenly in her hand. She stepped back quickly as the door opened from the inside and a man came out. Seeing her, he held the door open for her to enter. There was nothing to do but to pass in. A sense of fright swept over her, a feeling of having been trapped. The room was empty except for an office-boy who was stamping a pile of letters. He looked up inquiringly.

"Did you want to see Mr. Morris, ma'am?"

She nodded; she could not speak.

The boy disappeared into the next room.

"Mr. Morris is busy just now; he will be out in a few moments," he announced when he came back, and then went on stamping the letters.

The feeling of fright was growing within her. The very atmosphere of the room added to it. The great leather-bound volumes that lined the wall seemed to frown down upon her with the stern disapproval of the law.

The boy finished with the letters, gathered them into a wire basket and took them into the next room. Quick as the thought she turned toward the door, opened it softly, closed it after her and then flew down the hall, down the steps to the floor below, down another flight of stairs and then another, until at last she stopped, breathless, five floors below.

Flushed and panting she leaned against a window at the far end of a corridor, with quick, nervous glances back toward the stairs. But there was no one in sight; the long, vault-like corridors were empty. The window looked out on countless smoke-blackened roofs and great, skein-like meshes of telegraph wires. The sound of the street came up faintly—a muffled, booming sound. For a long time she stood there gazing out over the roofs.

When at last she turned away, she opened her purse and took out a card. A number of names were written on it. J. R. Morris was the first. F. W. Hibberd, Room 816, eighth floor, was the second. She walked straight toward the elevators and pressed a button labeled "Up."

"Eighth floor," she said to the man as she entered.

Two hours later she passed out of the great office building. A close observer might have noticed a certain tenseness about her expression. But that was all; she was not flushed nor nervous now.

It was barely four o'clock, but

already it was growing dusk, and the streets were glimmering with lights. The cars were crowded to the platform. She motioned for a cab that was passing near. The great towering buildings, the noise and turmoil that had interested her so keenly before, were passed by unnoticed now. In the long drive to the hotel her eyes were fixed straight in front of her and she saw nothing at all.

The card with the six names she still held in her hand. Two of them she had marked off—the first, J. R. Morris, whom she had not seen, and another who had appeared hurried and absent-minded. The other four had been most courteous and plainly interested. There had been an almost absurd similarity about it all. Each had expressed his regrets that he was not the attorney she was seeking; and they had all insisted on telephoning to the other lawyers of the same name, and had then offered their services. And she had promised each to let him know if her search was successful, and to avail herself of his assistance if it was not.

In her own room at the hotel she threw herself across the bed. For a long time she lay there. She had not troubled to turn on the lights, and the gloom of the room grew deeper.

A dim light from the hall came through the transom, and now and then the sound of clinking ice as the bell-boys hurried by. Later came the faint strains of an orchestra from the café. Long past the dinner hour, far into the night she lay there. When at last she rose, she turned on the lights, went over to the desk and wrote four letters.

MY DEAR MR. THOMPSON: I am sure you will be glad to know that I have found the Mr. Thompson of my letter of introduction. I was mistaken in the spelling of the name—it is Thomson, not Thompson, which of course caused much of the difficulty.

I wish to thank you again for your kindness to me in the matter.

Very sincerely,

KATHERINE CRAIG.

MY DEAR MR. DALY: I am sure you will be glad to know that I have found the Mr. Daley of my letter of introduction. I was

mistaken in the spelling of the name—it is Daley, not Daly, which of course caused much of the difficulty.

I wish to thank you again for your kindness to me in the matter.

Very sincerely,

KATHERINE CRAIG.

MY DEAR MR. HIBBERD: I am sure you will be glad to know that I have found the Mr. Hibbird of my letter of introduction. I was mistaken in the spelling of the name—it is Hibbird, not Hibberd, which of course caused much of the difficulty.

I wish to thank you again for your kindness to me in the matter.

Very sincerely,

KATHERINE CRAIG.

My dear Mr. Richards: The Mr. Richards of 432 Wall street, was not the one I was seeking. I am afraid I shall have to give it up as hopeless, and shall be glad to call at your office tomorrow morning, as you suggested, that you may take me to the Second National Bank and arrange for my deposit there.

I assure you I appreciate very much your kindness to me in this matter.

Very sincerely,

Katherine Craig

II

It was three months later. On a certain clear, cold morning two riders in Central Park were dashing over the frozen paths.

"That clump of trees to the right"—the man pointed with his crop—"one more last ride to that."

The horses sprang forward, eager at this game of racing in short heats. They drew up, flushed and laughing.

"Oh, look, look!" She leaned over and touched his arm eagerly. "That poor old man!"

A miserable old man was coming down a path toward them. His face was bleared and shrunk; his thin, ragged clothes gave no protection against the piercing cold.

"I am afraid he has been drinking. Shall I give him something, anyway?"

"Oh, yes, yes! I didn't know anyone could look so wretched as that."

She watched him as he rode up and dropped some silver into the withered, trembling hand. She turned away as he came back, but he had seen the tears in her eyes.

"My tender-hearted darling!"

"Oh, I can't bear that anyone should be wretched, now—now that we are so happy."

"I know, dear," he said gently; "I think I have something of that feeling, too—a desire that everyone should share our happiness with us."

She smiled up at him tremulously. "It is a beautiful thought—that our love should bring with it a deeper sympathy and kindness for everything."

It was quite early, and they had the Park almost to themselves. Now and then they met a mounted policeman or a man cleaning the paths, but rarely anyone else. For weeks, these early-morning rides had been one of their keenest pleasures.

As they rode back toward the entrance, a bit of lace fluttered at them from a bush by the path.

"Isn't that my handkerchief? I must have dropped it when we stopped to feed the squirrels."

He stooped for it laughingly. "You wouldn't be my dear, careless little girl, if you were not constantly losing things."

She laughed. "And I don't seem to be able to overcome it, do I?"

"I hope you never will. I love your careless little ways, and besides, I owe them so much. If you had not lost that letter of introduction, we might never have met!"

"Oh, don't!" She bent over to adjust her stirrup that he might not see her face. "I wish you would never mention that again!"

"Why, dear? Because you do not like to think of our meeting as the result of an accident?"

"I suppose that is it—because I can not bear to think of how near we came to not meeting at all."

"Katherine, how pale you are! Are you tired? Have we ridden too far?" He was leaning toward her anxiously.

"I don't think I feel tired."

"But I am afraid you are. I should have been more thoughtful. I want you to be very strong and well for this evening."

"I believe I almost dread this evening."

"Dread this evening?"

"It is the first reception since our engagement was announced Thursday. There will be so many people there that know you—so many mental inventories taken of me."

"But they will be favorable ones—they could not be otherwise."

"No, I feel that there will be an almost tacit resentment that you should marry an outsider—an unknown girl from the West. I even felt that in the newspaper reports. When they referred to you as a prominent lawyer, well-known clubman and member of an old Knickerbocker family, I could feel the resentment of the reporters that they could not finish the paragraph in the usual effective way—that you were engaged to a well-known society girl, also descendant of an old Knickerbocker family. Instead, they could only say, Miss Katherine Craig, of Middletown, Wisconsin." She laughed a little uncertainly. "That was all they could say of me—that I was from Middletown, Wisconsin."

He smiled down at her tenderly. "They could have said that you were the sweetest, dearest and most lovable woman in the world."

She shook her head. "I am afraid even society reporters would have conscientious scruples against such flagrant exaggerations."

When, a little later, he left her at the door, it was with tender, anxious admonition to rest and sleep during the afternoon, that she might feel stronger for the evening.

A quarter of nine! For almost an hour she had been watching the little clock on her dressing-table. A sick feeling of dread was creeping into her heart. That he should be late tonight—tonight! He had never been late before.

There was a soft pelting sound against the window. She went over and pushed aside the curtain. Large flakes of snow were falling. Slowly they were covering up the window-sill and the great dark roofs outside. A stronger gust of wind rattled the sash

and swirled around the building with a plaintive wail.

Another half-hour of sickening suspense. Then a hurried step down the hall and a sharp rap at her door—a bell-boy with his card.

He was waiting for her in the reception hall by the elevator. And that was all. He offered no excuse, no explanation. But there was something in the quiet coldness of his face that seemed like heavy, icy hands gripping at her heart.

Like a stereopticon view flashed before her a scene in the café of a great office building; a man at a near-by table was opening a paper with the glaring headlines: "An adventuress! Well-known society woman proved to be an adventuress." An adventuress. . . . An adventuress. . . .

He had led her out to the cab in silence; and now, as they drove off, she leaned back in the shadow that he might not see her face. The light from the cab lamp shone full on him. One swift glance she stole at him, and for the rest of the way her gaze was fixed out of the window. Once he asked if she was cold, and once if the lap-robe was well over her. And that was all—the rest of the ride was in silence.

It never occurred to her to doubt the thing that her mind had flashed to with such swift certainty. He knew. He knew.

His face, his voice—everything about him cried out that he knew. She wondered dully when he would tell her—what he would say. It didn't seem to matter much. After all, why should it? Why should anything matter now? Somehow the only thing she felt keenly was a dread for the cab to stop—the necessity for action that would follow.

They drew up before a great house ablaze with lights. An awning led down from the door. A few moments later they were making their way through the crowded, over-heated rooms.

It is one of the results of our social training that in the most tragic moments of our lives we can bow and smile and make pleasant little comments.

"Richards, I say, Richards!" An alert, keen-looking man was shaking hands with him warmly. "I want to congratulate you. I saw you when you came in and have been trying to make my way over to you ever since. And Miss Craig"—he turned to her cordially—"you don't know, Richards, that Miss Craig and I are old acquaintances. Some time ago she lost a letter of introduction to a lawyer, a Mr. Daley, and she came to my office by mistake. Do you know, Miss Craig, how I regretted that you found that letter—I was hoping that I might have the pleasure of giving you my services."

A burst of music from a near-by orchestra drowned her almost inaudible reply. The hostess came up hurriedly now and claimed Mr. Daly. He turned away reluctantly. "I shall hope to see you again this evening."

And still they made their way on through the crowd. And still she kept on bowing, smiling, and making pleasant little comments. It might have been ten minutes or an hour later, she had lost all sense of time, that someone was introducing them to a Mr. Hibberd. She turned to find a tall man smiling down at her pleasantly.

"I don't believe an introduction to Miss Craig is necessary. Isn't this the Miss Craig that called at my office looking for another Mr. Hibberd? You had lost a letter of introduction to him on the train. Wasn't that how it happened?"

That was all she heard clearly—the rest was vague. And when again they passed on through the crowd, she saw only a bleared line of lights along the ceiling.

He was leading her to a windowed recess. Now he placed two letters in her hand. "I would like you to read these. They came this afternoon."

MY DEAR RICHARDS: I have just read the announcement of your engagement. Congratulations, my dear boy! I had thought you one of the hopeless ones.

I believe I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Craig. She called at my office about six months ago, shortly before I went to Europe. It seems that she had just come to New York and had lost a letter of intro-

duction to a Mr. Williamson, a lawyer here; and she called, thinking I might be the one. I remember her as being very charming, and my congratulations are most hearty.

Cordially,

C. A. WILLIAMSON.

MY DEAR RICHARDS: So you have succumbed at last! But it doesn't seem so strange when I think of the lady. You see, I have met her and I assure you I was impressed most favorably. She came to my office some time ago looking for a Mr. Thompson to whom she had a letter of introduction, which she had lost. It is needless to say that I deeply regretted that I did not happen to be the man. I think you are a particularly lucky fellow and wish you all kinds of happiness.

Yours, etc.,

W. F. THOMPSON.

As on a sensitized plate, in one swift glance those letters were photographed on her brain. And then—then she turned blindly away, swiftly pressing through the crowd to the nearest doorway, through to that to another room and still another, and then the hall. Snatching up a long wrap, she darted down the hall, past the astonished footman, out the great door, down the carpeted steps under the awning, out to the street; past the long line of carriages, down the street, around the corner into a dark side street; another turn to a still darker street and then on and on . . . A mad, wild rush.

Twice she stumbled and fell, but was up and on again in an instant. The snow beat against her bare head and clung to her face and neck. Her thin slippers were soaked through; her drenched skirts flapped around her ankles. But she was conscious only of a great compelling force that urged her on and on.

The streets were almost deserted; but now and then she passed an umbrella held low over some muffled figure. Once a man called out to her and then tried to follow her; but she ran on, turning one corner and then another until she was lost in the snow and darkness.

But now her strength was weakening; the snow grew deeper and harder to struggle through. A great exhaustion was creeping over her. She was

growing dizzy and faint and her mind more and more confused. Again and again she fell, but always stumbled on. That lamp-post at the next corner, she must reach that. . . . And now that great dark sign that hung in the next block. . . . Now the red light in the block beyond. . . .

And so she staggered on from one point to another. Her mind held no plan, no thought of destination—only an urging to go on and on.

There was a sound of footsteps crunching in the snow behind her. A quick, frightened glance over her shoulder—a tall, dark figure of a man was following her. A second later a heavy hand was on her arm. A street-lamp lit up a flushed, dissipated face as it leered down at her.

"Aren't you out on a pretty bad night?"

With a startled cry she jerked away and ran on, but the heavy hand was on her arm again.

"Oh, no, my dear, you don't get away from me that easy. I guess you'll come with me now."

A cold fear clutched at her heart. Again she tried to free herself, but the grip on her arm only tightened. Desperately she fought with the feeling of faintness that was growing over her. Her eyes strained through the darkness for a policeman—for anyone that she might cry out to. But there was no one in sight—the streets were wholly deserted.

She realized now for the first time that she was on a business street; a street of shops and offices, closed and barricaded for the night. If she should scream out—there would be no one in those dark buildings to hear her. How completely she was in the power of this man!

She caught a glimpse of a lighted window—just a little farther on. "Coffee and Lunch Room," read the sign. Could it be open? A few more steps—it was open! Through the steam-covered window could be seen faintly a long row of tables and a woman behind the counter. Quick as thought came her plan.

"Oh, my slipper—it has come off! There in the snow!"

He released her arm to look for it, and then with a desperate strength and swiftness she flew to the lunch room, threw open the door, slammed it to and bolted it.

Almost instantly came a heavy shaking of the door from the outside.

"Unlock that door—you damn minx! You think you tricked me, don't you? I'll show you!" And then came a volley of foul oaths.

There was no one in the place but the woman behind the counter, who came rushing up now.

"Look here—what do you mean? You can't make a row in this place!"

Katherine caught her hand as she reached out to open the door.

"Oh, no—no! You must not! Oh, won't you help me—won't you—?"

A wave of blackness swept before her. Her hands slipped from the woman's as she fell to the floor.

A strong odor of coffee—the pressure of a thick, hot cup against her lips. The woman was bending over her with an anxious face.

She pushed the cup away and tried to rise. "The man—you won't let him in?"

"No—no. He's gone long ago. Now, drink the rest of this coffee; it will do you good. Your clothes are wet through."

She glanced around vaguely at the long row of empty tables, with chairs piled on those in the back of the room; at the counter with its glass case of pies and cakes; at the great brass coffee-urns. There was a strange sense of unreality about it all. She closed her eyes, and gave herself up to the drowsy stupor that was creeping over her.

She was only dimly conscious of the quick opening and closing of the door and the sweep of cold air that followed. A moment later and strong arms were around her, and a voice, broken with love and anxiety, was whispering, "Katherine! Katherine!"

With a curious sense of being far away, she heard faintly the few hurried

words with the woman, the anxious questions and the woman's breathless story of how she came, and the man that had followed her, and then her profuse thanks as a bill was slipped into her hand.

"Oh, Katherine, Katherine, my poor darling!"

Gathering her closer in his arms, he carried her out to the cab. "And that it should be *I* who found you—not any of the detectives who are searching. I have found you myself!"

Still holding her, he wrapped the fur rugs close around her. And so they drove off through the night.

For a while she lay inert and motionless in his arms. Then quite suddenly she released herself and leaned back against the seat.

"No, no," as he tried to draw her to him again, "we must see things as they are. It is all true—all that you thought when you gave me those letters. You would not have taken me in your arms then—why should you now? Merely because I am weak and cold and drenched?"

"Oh, Katherine, don't, dear, don't talk of that now. You are not strong enough."

"I must—I cannot lie in your arms and feel that it is only pity."

"Then listen!" He took both her hands in his and held them firmly. "It is *love*. I thought it all out in that fearful hour I was searching for you. It is *you*—the best of you that I love. And it was not the best of you that did that thing—that was only the result of some momentary reckless impulse. For don't you see, dear, you didn't follow it up? You dismissed all those men except me. If you had been really a bad or adventurous woman, you would have encouraged them all. But you didn't—you *didn't*."

His voice broke, and he drew her to him almost fiercely. "Oh, dear, I don't know. Perhaps that is all mere words. If you had encouraged them all—oh, I don't believe it would have mattered what you did—I think I would still love you. I would still love you because—I could not help it."



AS THE ROSE

By Ruby Archer

THE wild rose whitens now, for Spring today
Waved his sweet hand, and sadly went away;
The wild rose whitens, trembling on her spray.

Her life was good—when weary ones went by
She gave her inmost beauty to their sigh;
Her life was good—why doth she dread to die?

If I could know, amid the great world-pain
That quivers in my heart, the old refrain—
If I could know I had not lived in vain;

That all my being's worth had been expressed—
Life, color, perfume, loveliest and best—
That all my being's worth one soul had blessed;

It would be sweet to blend with earth, before
The hot life-summers through my bare leaves pour—
It would be sweet to die, and be no more.